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13-1. Ascending Peerage

Satou's here. In order to escape the predicament, the main character unleashes their hidden ability, that kind of method appears often in tales. However, it seems that it won't go that well in reality.

◇

At the opening day of the Kingdom Conference, we have gathered in the great audience hall in order to participate in the [Great Audience Ceremony].
It seems today is the time in which people are conferred and raised peerage, and posts such as cabinet minister are announced.
Although it's called Kingdom Conference, they're not doing anything resembling conference in the opening day.

Today it's not only Satou who's going to participate in the [Great Audience Ceremony], Nanashi is too.
Nanashi is only going to appear for about 10 minutes, but even during that time, Satou cannot not present in the ceremony.
It's slightly troublesome, but I should be able to manage it somehow.

The great audience hall we're in is unlike other audience hall I've seen so far that are rectangular shaped, this one is fan-shaped.
I wonder if it's like a concert hall or a ceremonial hall?

More than 1000 nobles are lined up in the great audience hall that's slightly dark.
Even with this many people, the great audience hall is large enough for it not to feel cramped.

The king's throne is on the highest place, behind it there are some thin glass tube objects that look like neon tubes that are extended to the ceiling.

And then, once the music starts to flow in low volume, the objects begin to be clad in light.

"His Majesty the King, entering."

The high-ranking official working as the host announces that the king is entering, and then when the king sits on his throne, the objects shine, while the object's unseen orchestra starts playing a solemn tune.
The play is probably for enhancing the king's authority.

--Now then, since the surrounding's line of sights have gathered on the throne, I'll change to Nanashi.

Next moment, I'm already in the royal castle's waiting room.
Through my [Special Ability], the [Unit Arrangement], that I haven't been able to use until

now.
For some reason, I've become able to use this after the disturbance from before was over.

If we talk about the reason, I can only think two things, either it's because I defeated 'gods' or because I wore the Divine Sword's power.
Unfortunately, [Unit Creation] is still unusable.

With this [Unit Arrangement], I can freely move my team unit in my home ground.
Moreover, it's without using magic power.

Truly a cheat ability.
Right now, the places recognized as home ground are only the mansions I own, Dragon Valley, Muno City, Boruenan Countryside, Labyrinth City, Duchy Capital, and Royal Capital.

Now then, the chamberlain is approaching from the other side of the door.
I'll think of this area with [Unit Arrangement].

Further, the place where I should have been was arranged with Satou's doll at the same time when I moved here. Of course I've changed the positions with [Unit Arrangement].

The inside of this Satou doll is an automatic skeletal golem wearing disguise suit I've made in the [Mansion of Ivy] in the Labyrinth City before.
It can't hold a conversation nor fight, but its gesture traces are perfect so there's no problem as a short-time substitute.
It's specialized in camouflage, so it doesn't seem like anyone can distinguish it as a doll from the real person as long as they don't have Arisa's level of [Persona Appraisal].
I've confirmed it by testing Kuro doll with an appraiser advisor contracted by Echigoya firm.

Now then, I, who have changed into golden armored hero Nanashi with [QuickDress] skill, is guided by the chamberlain to the great audience hall.

"Introducing, the hero who saved our kingdom from crisis--Hero Nanashi."

While being lighted by spotlight from light magic, I step forward next to the king.
Since I've returned holy sword Claiomh Solais to Mito, I'm armed with the fake made from Orichalcum metal.

The nobles' line of sights concentrate on me.

I stand before the king and with my back on the nobles, I take off my helmet and kneel.
I've used a newly made white mask for the face, but the nobles shouldn't have seen it.

"Hero Nanashi, the people of our kingdom have been saved by you. Extolling your achievement, we will grant you the house name of Mitsukuni and the peerage of dukedom."
"I respectfully receive."

The king looks like he has a bit of a hard time, but he can't exactly act the way he usually does in front of other nobles.

Before long, the king's body is wrapped in white phosphoresce.

"■■ Conferring Peerage"

I'm wrapped with floating light particles as the king chants the spell.

>Title [Duke of Shiga Kingdom] Acquired
>Rank [Noble (Duke)] Acquired

I update the status in the Exchange column since it doesn't automatically change.

I put the golden helmet again and turn back toward the nobles.
Heroic music plays from the orchestra in good timing as the illumination on the back darken as it has been prepared in advance.
I take out the imitation holy sword and put magic power into it, showing off the blue light toward the great audience hall.

"My name is Nanashi. The sword that defeats demons. I do not mingle in quarrels between men. When men fight against powerful demons beyond their capacities, call my name. I will go toward that land and destroy the demon--"

The speech is in accordance to Shiga Kingdom ceremonial courtesy, but coming out of my own mouth, it sounds like what a chuunibyou would say, damaging me with plain mental damage.
Finishing the five minutes speech, hero Nanashi will now leave this place.

"--Then, I will go to the land where I'm needed."

I float slowly with Sky Drive toward the top of the great audience hall.
After rising enough, I make the 30-meter long airship I've left floating in the royal castle's courtyard to appear in the room.

Noise appear from the nobles who are surprised.

"Ooh, is that the Jules Verne?"
"The same model of ship as Saga Empire hero's ship huh!"

I heard such voices from the nobles.
The first voice was of Baron Muno.

The outer shell of my airship is made in Boruenan just like the hero's ship, so it's only natural.

While floating, I board the airship, and after a short pause, I teleport together with the airship to the royal castle's courtyard using [Unit Arrangement].

Now then, Nanashi's turn is over.
I start the airship's auto-pilot, and make it so that it'll go toward the duchy capital area after

flying a lap around the royal capital.
I slow its speed to be only as fast as a horse's, and instruct the automatic skeletal golems equipped with golden armors to wave their hands toward the royal capital's people while standing in the opened observatory room at the bow.

With this, people who think that we are the same people as them should be decreased now.
After all, the royal capital's people witness hero Nanashi and the golden knights parading around while we are participating in the ceremony.

Once I've finished the series of preparation, I use [Unit Arrangement] to go back to the great audience hall. Of course, I've changed back the Exchange column and my clothes.

I would have pushed Nanashi's role to Mito if she were in the royal capital, but it seems she's in the Fujisan mountains along with the Heavenly Dragon.

◇

"Lord Leon Muno. I elevate you to the rank of Earldom."
"I respectfully accept."

Continuing the new year ceremony, Baron Muno underwent peerage raising ceremony.
After an exchange in Shiga Kingdom Language, the king who's holding the Royal Scepter chants a spell.

"■■ Convert Peerage"

I've never heard that command word before.

When the king finishes chanting, ring of light appear around Baron Muno and the king, then infinite symbol-like shapes are formed on the outer circumference.
The ring of light illuminates the surrounding for a while.
Before long the ring of light is disappearing to the sky and the ground.

And then, Baron Muno's title and rank have been changed to [Earl] when the light subsides.

Since the ceremony is over, Earl Muno bows to the king and gets back to his seat.
There's no applause or cheer, I wonder if that's the rule. Though it's not like it's because of it, the orchestra starts to play a solemn but rousing tune.

Next, the eldest son of old Earl Lesseu undergoes the [Succession to Peerage] ceremony and becomes the new Earl Lesseu.

"Chevalier Satou Pendragon, to be present."

Since I got called by the facilitator official, I stand up from my seat.
I thought that they were going to call it in turn by the ranking, but I got called earlier than Jeril who holds Baronet rank.

I kneel in front of the king while having a slight unpleasant premonition.

"I elevate Chevalier Satou Pendragon to the rank of viscountcy."

....Wait.

Wasn't it decided that I would be raised to merely either honorary baron or baronet?
The difference between a generation-long honorary noble to a permanent viscount is like the difference between a president of a neighborhood association to a diet member y'know?

The king begins the spell without confirming me like he did with Nanashi and Earl Muno.

"■■ Convert Peerage"

I'm wrapped with particles of light with the king's spell.
The effect is different compared to the earls' earlier.

>Title [Viscount of Shiga Kingdom] Acquired
>Rank [Noble (Viscount)] Acquired

I'm not the only one who's surprised, booing and noise come from the nobles regardless of lower and upper ranked ones.
When I look closely, the booing come from the protégés and family of Duke Bishtal.

I understand how you guys feel but please complain about it to the king instead.

◇

Following after Jeril who became a baron, many nobles also underwent the promotion ceremony.

"Retainer of Pendragon House, Liza."

Next is the turn for the [Ennoblement] of the Mithril Explorers.

Liza is the very first, probably because she's won against a Shiga Eight Swords.
Liza who's chosen to wear knight clothes today walks toward the king with nervous expression on her face.

"Slave of Pendragon House, Liza, I confer you the peerage of Honorary Baroness of Kishresgalza."

--Honorary Baroness?

"■■ Conferring Peerage"

Once the king's spell ends, Liza's name changes into [Liza Kishresgalza].
Kishresgalza is the name of Liza's tribe. And then her titles of [Satou's Slave] and the rank

[Slave] have disappeared, and the titles [Retainer of Pendragon], [Baroness of Shiga Kingdom] and the rank [Noble (Baroness)] have appeared.

"Baroness Liza Kishresgalza, use your peerless spearmanship to protect the people."
"At your will."

The king said different lines than the obligatory ones for the first time.

Continuing on, Nana, Lulu, Arisa, Tama, and Pochi are conferred [Honorary Chevalier] rank.
However, Arisa's and Lulu's ranks remain [Slave].

Through Ms. Nina, I've told the thing about Arisa's and Lulu's [Geass] in advance, and we have been recognized as a special case.
Normally everyone would have been declined the [Ennoblement], but since there was the case with Liza, we were given this special exception.

According to the prime minister's information, the only people who have [Geass] skill are the emperor of weaselkin empire, and the magi of the western kingdom who's called [Dark Sage].
Once I've gotten the Chant orb, I'm thinking of going to either of the country to get the [Geass] skill.

Another way is with the pope of Holy Kingdom Parion, the so-called Zazaris person, his ceremonial magic [Wish] seems like it could release the [Geass], but since this magic's compensation seems to be big, it's going to be the last resort.

In addition, due to the elven law, Mia cannot become a noble of foreign countries, so she's declined the Ennoblement.
Just being an elf gets you to be treated like a state guest though, so the person herself doesn't seem to mind it.

◇

Once the elevation and conferment ceremony is over, the nobles who are going to be demoted and get their peerage stripped are announced.
The noble who hid the [Light of Liberty] members and the other nobles who helped him are going to be executed along with their families.
Children who are 10 years old and younger are not to be executed, they're going to be sent to the monastery on Fujisan mountain foot.

Next, they announce the shuffle and addition of official positions.
The prime minister is to hold another position, that is the minister of [Ministry of Tourism].

No matter how I think about it, it's blatantly obvious that it's a front for the prime minister's spy network, on top of it overlapping with the [Ministry of Foreign Affair].

Among the candidates of Shiga Eight Swords, only Jeril is chosen.
The remaining two don't seem to be qualified. There are an axe-user and a shield-user

whose levels are close to Jeril among the Mithril Explorers, I'll recommend them before my turn comes.

Lastly the king himself announces that the second and third large-scale warships are going into commission within this year, and the current warship that's already in commission is going to go on patrols to every internal territory, and each regional lords will be loaned a small airship.

Those airships are probably using the aerodynamic engines I gave them as Nanashi.
The magic furnace's fuel consumption is bad so the cost of service is expensive, it shouldn't revolutionize distribution that could catch the gods' attention.

The demand for magic cores which are the fuel for the magic furnace is going to increase, I have a hunch that more people would come to the Labyrinth City and Seryuu city.

In addition, the magic furnace occupies a lot of space in the small airship, so its load capacity is only as good as one carriage.
The small airships are only usable for the lords and governors, yet cheer still come from the territory lords.

Thus the new year's great audience ceremony is over, and the king does a broadcast through [Communique] Space.
There were these words in it.

"--thanks to Hero Duke Nanashi Mitsukuni and the Order of Golden Knights who saved the royal capital from the demon--"

Apparently they call us the [Order of Golden Knights] in the official papers.
I pray in my heart that there will be no event that would require us to appear again in the royal capital.

◇

From tomorrow on, Kingdom Conference will be held for four days until the fifth day of January.
The lower nobles can chose to only participate in the new year ceremony, but as someone who has been conferred the rank of the lowest seat of the upper nobility, I'm also stuck to take part for four days.

"Still, it would have been nice if Master told us beforehand that you'd become a viscount."
"I too only knew about it during the actual thing you see."

Geez, it's terrible even for a kingdom where the rulers rule the bottom.
Perhaps it was someone's plan since they knew I would have refused had I known.

Well, I guess there's no use crying over spilled milk.
It's not like I can decline now.

I exchange words with Arisa like that while everyone is in kotatsu, enjoying the new year dish made by Lulu.

Arisa's family name as a noble is Tachibana.
Previously, Ms. Nina had told us that Chevalier Tachibana existed, but when we checked the list of nobles in the royal castle, she had mistaken it with Chevalier Tachivana, so Arisa was able to use her former family name without problem.

By the way, Pochi's and Tama's family names are the same as Liza's. At first, the girls said that they wanted Pendragon family name, but Arisa bewildered them by saying, "It's worth it when your family name changes to Pendragon when you're getting married right?", so each chose a different house name.

Lulu inherited the family name of her ancestor Japanese, 'Watari', Nana inherited 'Nagasaki' from her previous master, Zen.

"Master, please try eating this one too."
"Thank you. Lulu's new year dish is a bit unusual, but it's very delicious."

I tell my thought about Lulu's new year dish.

"--Unusual?"
"Yeah, there's no fish and prawn surimi in the datemaki, and the kurikinton is entirely made of chestnuts, they're different from the recipes of my hometown."

When I pointed out the unusual parts in murmur to Arisa, her expression becomes bitter like she's feeling full of "I've been had."
Apparently, she used vague recipe for Lulu to make.

"U, um, I'll make it again!"
"Sorry, sorry. My way of speaking was bad. The flavor isn't the same with the one I know, but it tastes better than the new year dish I know."

I said more to hold back Lulu who had stood up.

"Yummymy~?"
"Lulu's dish is tasty nodesu!"
"N, tasty."

Tama, Pochi, and Mia also agree with me.
Their favorites are; the sea bream served whole for Tama, fried prawns for Pochi, and Kurikinton for Mia.

"The recipes for the new year dish differ in each region, so it's fine to think of this as the royal capita-style new year dish you know?"
"That's right Lulu. This boudara is quite chewy, it's delicious."

Smiles return Lulu's face with mine and Liza's words.

When the meal is over, everyone is relaxing on the kotatsu.
Tama is peeling and eating chestnuts while sitting on my lap, Mia is feeding me a bunch of peeled oranges.

--Ah, how peaceful.

Pink color from lipstick is adorned on the lips of Lulu who's dressed up as if she's proud of it
I sent word of praises many times to Lulu today, enjoying her beauty dyed in red. The smile of a bashful beautiful girl can really become a habit.

I'm enjoying the peaceful dinner with everyone, restoring my energy for tomorrow.

Now then, I'll work vigorously again tomorrow!

13-2. New Year Works

Satou's here. There were many times where I had to go to work during the last day of the year once I became a working adult, but made sure to wrestle the day off during the new year's day. You have to relish the feeling of new year for at least the morning of the new year's day after all.

◇

"--That is all, keep selling our products to procure cash until the time of the auction after the Kingdom Conference. Tell the nobles with no money that we can discuss to sell them things with credit by next month."
"Understood."

After putting the children to sleep, I went to Echigoya Firm and reaffirmed the direction and policy for the new year.
The people who have gathered on the top floor of the main building of Echigoya Firm are former noble daughter explorers who manage the firm including the Manager, Porina and other the workshop managers, and also Kuro's slaves, Nell and Tifaliza, six people in total.

"Kuro-sama several letters have come from nobles who are impressed with Nanashi-sama's recent endeavor, they wish to personally meet. There are letters from the three dukes and the eight marquises which require fast responses among them--"
"I won't meet them. I entrust it to Manager. Tell them that I'm going to another country with my master, Nanashi-sama."
"Certainly. As for the order of the visitations--"
"I'll leave it to you."

Manager solemnly nods without a trace of displeasure on her face even though I've left it all to her.
This girl is well-versed in the power balance of lineage nobles and negotiations, so she's more reliable in annoying negotiations than me.

"Kuro-sama, we are lacking employees for accounting and paperworks in the secret division. In addition, there have been more spies trying to intrude the residence, so I would like to request the increase of personnels that can deal with it...."
"Okay. I permit you to hire more. I'd leave it to Manager for the selection and the wages. Report only the summary to me."
"Thank you very much for your trust. However, since it's a secret division, I am thinking of buying knowledgeable slaves instead of employees."

Fumu, slaves huh.
I look up the inventory of the slave traders on the map.

It seems there are enough people in the slave trader where I bought Nell and Tifaliza.
There were many noble houses who were stripped off their peerages for the crime of

treason, so maybe the retainers of those houses were sold as crime slaves.

"Very well, I permit the slave buying. Bill the payment for the end of the month."
"There is no problem with the payment, but we cannot establish master-servant contracts if Kuro-sama doesn't go yourself."
"You be the master."
"Is it alright for me to?"

I'm planning to use use Echigoya Firm's budget to buy them anyway, so there's no problem and I affirm her.

"Lastly, there's a request for our cooperation in the revival of the royal capital from the prime minister."
"--Cooperation?"
"Yes, although they said cooperation, it is about ordering raw materials from Echigoya Firm."

I look at the document presented by Tifaliza who's beside Manager.
The price in the contract is five times the market price so it's quite nice, but the time limit is very limited.

"Very well, accept it."
"Kuro-sama, concerning--"

Manager told me that acquiring the raw materials would be difficult even for five times the market price since there are currently a rush for building material-buying around the royal capital.

"No problem. Order the material from the Duchy Capital, Muno territory, and Kuhanou territory."
"However, then the cost for carrying them would..."
"Have you forgotten Manager?"

There's no problem if I just carry them myself.
I can probably secure them at 20% the market price if I buy them on-site.

It shouldn't be laborious if I just have the local merchants to get the materials ready.

Once the work talk is over, we're having a new year banquet.
With Manager's instruction, the luxurious dishes and liquor prepared in downstairs are lined up on the huge table in the strategy meeting room.

--Right, I have to tell them one more thing before they all get drunk.

"Everyone, listen. Tomorrow night, I'm giving you a special duty after the night time."

The night time is around six hours after the sunset.
After confirming that everyone has heard me, I continue.

"It'll be over in a moment, but there's a high possibility that you won't be able to work afterward. Finish the work for that day beforehand."

Compared to the noise when I told them about [Special duty] at first, the room fell silent now.
I thought that there would be some complaints since they'd be getting late-night works so soon in the new year, but the atmosphere doesn't seem to be that. If anything, it seems favorable.
Good grief, you guys are too workaholic.

Manager asked me which clothes would be good for it, so I told her to wear whatever she likes.
Not like clothes would affect much during works, she sure asks some strange things.

At that time, a blue luminous point is reflected on the radar. In front of Pendragon mansion's house.
I tell everyone that I'm going to leave early since some business came up, and come back to Pendragon Mansion with [Unit Arrangement].

I realized that I had forgotten to tell the important point, "I'm taking the management-level people to the labyrinth for leveling", but since there's no danger for them anyway, telling them at the appointed day should be fine.

◇

"Master, there is a guest."
"Ah, Lulu. Sorry for waking you up."

I change to my own clothes with Quick-Dress after getting back to my private room.
Everyone has woken up from the knocker's sound from the entrance hall, but I tell them that they may sleep, and then I go downstairs while taking only Lulu and Liza along.
When I opened the entrance, soft light of golden hair entered my view.

"Sa-Satou-san! I-I'm glad that you're alright."

Zena-san who should've been in the Labyrinth City hugs me.
While hugging me with trembling hands, she keeps repeating, "I'm glad. I'm really glad." with tearful voice.

Behind her are Lilio and the other two girls from Zena Squad. Apparently, they rode on several horses, both the girls and the horses are breathing feebly.

'Burun', I heard some familiar snort, so when I look at the horses, there are two carriage horses with dignity among the war horses and the passenger horses.
They're Gii and Darii that we left in the labyrinth city's mansion.
When I look closer, the other horses are also the horses from our mansion. Ms. Miteruna who's house-sitting the mansion probably lent them.

"Yes, please don't worry. None of our girls is hurt either. Now, everyone, you must be tired. I'll prepare the guest rooms, so please wipe your sweat and relax."
"I'll prepare the guest rooms immediately."
"Then I will take the horses to the stable."

Reacting to my words, Lulu and Liza start to act before I order them.
I invite the three people of Zena Squad while soothing Zena-san who's crying while still hugging me.

"It seemed to be terrible, but there was no victim around this area huh."
"Yes, fortune blessed us."

I guide the four to the parlor while answering Ms. Iona.

"Did a demon lord come out maybe?"
"No, it was just a round pink-colored greater demon and a lot of monsters."
"--Greater?!"

When I answered the joking Lilio honestly, beside her, Zena-san who was drinking Lulu's tea turned her head as if she was going to jump.

"Ah, you don't need to worry. They were all defeated by Hero Nanashi-sama, and his Order of Golden Knights. We couldn't get a turn to come out at all."
"What a relief...."

According to Zena Squad, a priest who was training together with them in the labyrinth city suddenly received an oracle that conveyed about the crisis in the royal capital.

"Geez, stopping Zena-chi who suddenly used magic, going to run was hard you see."
"Mo-mou, Lilio! I even said so much to keep it a secret!"

You can certainly run faster than a horse with [Wind Walk] of the wind magic, but the muscle fatigue from using it is furious, so it's not suited for marathon-like long range.

"And then we asked Miteruna-dono on our accord to borrow the mansion horses and intruded everyone upon them. We forcibly and unreasonably borrowed the horses, so please I would ask your tolerance for Miteruna-dono."
"It's alright. I've given that much discretion to her."

Miss Iona apologized for Ms. Miteruna's judgment, but since there's no particular problem about it, I smile back.
Lulu come in to tell that the rooms have been prepared, so I let the girls whose stamina gauges are about to dry up to sleep.

"Zena-chi can sleep with the boy you know?"
"Mou! Stupid Lilio!"

My bed is wide, so adding only Zena-san is not a problem, but since everyone would be

together, ero-things like Lilio's imagined won't happen you know.
Before parting with the girls in front of the parlor, I tell Zena-san, "Thank you for worrying about me."

◇

"Eh? You're attending the Kingdom Conference?"
"Yes, I was elevated to Viscountcy during the『Great Audience Ceremony』yesterday, so I'm obliged to attend the conference."

I apologize to Zena-san and the others who are eating breakfast together with us for not being able to accompany them touring the royal capital.
I guess it can't be helped for Zena-san to mutter, "V-viscount?!" while her face is hardening.
Even though I had become a honorary knight when we reunited in the labyrinth city, I jumped up three ranks to a viscount when we reunited again in the royal capital.

I wait for Zena-san to calm down and then continue the talk.
The girls intended to immediately return to the labyrinth city after confirming my safety, but since the horses need two days to rest, they're going to tour the royal capital with Ms. Lilio and Ms. Ruu recommendation.
In public, it's to be an [Inspection].

"Then maybe I should ask Liza to guide you?"
"Yes, certainly. Zena-sama, I am unfit to be Master's replacement, but I will guide you with utmost sincerity."
"Please, I'm sorry to trouble you."

Liza readily consents my request, she's going to guide Zena-san and the others.

"Getting a honorary baroness to guide you sure is luxurious~"
"Hey, Arisa."

Reproving voice of Lulu toward Arisa's teasing words echoes in the dining room.

"Honorary baroness?"
"Yes, I was given the peerage yesterday."

Liza solemnly answers Zena-san who's surprised.

"No way! A lizardkin is a noble?!"
"Is it because she's a mithril explorer?"
"Tsk, tsk, tsk, Liza-san's achievement is not just that~"

Arisa replied the slightly rude Ms. Lilio and the plainly surprised Ms. Ruu with bragging.

"You see! She defeated that living legend, Zeff Julberg the『Unfalling』of Shiga Eight Swords!"
"Amazing!"

"Y-you serious?"
"Shiga Eight Swords is the strongest group of knights in Shiga Kingdom right?"
"I can't simply believe that being brought up suddenly, but if that's the truth, I can understand how she was given Honorary Baroness peerage."

The girls of Zena squad each reacted differently to Arisa's exaggerated remark.
It was only Zena-san who frankly commended back.

"Moreover, she declined the invitation to become a Shiga Eight Swords, and chose to be Master's retainer you know~"

Arisa sticks out her flat chest.
Lastly, she told them, "All of us have also become『Honorary Chevaliers』you see!", but Liza's impact was too great, their reaction were only like, "Hm~m."

I call out to Arisa to change the topic.

"Arisa, sorry but can you attend the Royal Academy until we go back to the Labyrinth city from now on?"

Actually I was to go to the royal academy myself to check the content of the lesson and head-hunting people, but since I couldn't go due to the Kingdom Conference, I thought of having Arisa as my substitute.

--However, Arisa's reaction is slightly different from my expectation.

"Awright! It's the school arc isn't it! Breaking into the school arc, in the armed battle meet, the labyrinth explorers and the triumvirate! Wooooo, I'm boilinggg!"
"Arisa, bad manners!"

Lulu scolds Arisa who stands up on her chair.

"Can't be helped nya~"
"We're in front of the guests you know?"
"Please forgive."

Arisa who's in reflecting pose is being scolded by Lulu in low voice.

"School~?"
"Training school nanodesu?"
"I guess it's similar. There are classes for literature, and magic besides about the labyrinth. Does everyone want to go too?"
"Going~"
"I want to go nodesu!"
"Yes!"
"I want."

Only four people replied energetically, Tama Pochi, Shiro, and Crow.

If Shiro and Crow go, then Nana has to go as their guardian, but I wonder how about Lulu and Mia?

"I have been given a letter of invitation from the chefs of royal castle, so I am thinking of visiting there."

Come to think of it, Lulu and the royal castle's chefs did some kind of cooking battle during the end-of-year evening party didn't they.
I'm worried to let Lulu go by herself.

"Nana, sorry but could you go with Lulu as her guard?"
"Accepted Master's order."

Nana easily nodded, so I check Mia's plan.

"Mia, what are you going to do?"
"Go."

Mia had a difficult face, but she decided to go to the royal academy together with Arisa and the others since being alone in the mansion would be meaningless.

◇

I ride with the four people of Zena Squad in the carriage going for the castle, and go toward the mansion of Earl Seryuu in the royal capital.
As expected, they can't exactly not check on Earl Seryuu's safety when they've come to the royal capital and all.

When we were telling the guards the purpose of our visit, just right at that time, a carriage carrying Earl Seryuu's party going to the royal castle came.

Zena-san and the others get down the carriage, and kneel beside the carriage of Earl Seryuu.

"Zena of Marientail house huh. I remember seeing the girls behind too."
"We have come rushing to the royal capital from the labyrinth city after hearing the disaster that happened here."

Zena-san nervously replied Earl Seryuu.

"Umu, good works."

The Earl roughly replied with appreciation and turns his view toward me.

"Then, any reason you were coming from Sir Pendragon's carriage?"

The Earl is asking Zena-san but his inquisitive line of sights are turned toward me.
Right at that, another carriage came from the mansion.

"Earl-sama, is there any problem?"

A past-thirty year-old noble with red hair comes down the carriage.
The nobleman smiles broadly when his eyes meet mine.

"Ooh, isn't it Satou-dono?!"
"Viscount Belton-sama, it has been a while."

He was the noble I saved from being eaten by spiders during the disturbance of Seryuu City's Labyrinth.

"Belton, are you two acquainted?"
"Yes, he's the benefactor who saved me and my daughter from peril in the labyrinth."
"Hou? I did not receive any report pertaining a retainer of Earl Muno being involved in the case from before...."

The earl strokes his beard as if going back his memory.

"Does Satou-dono serves Earl Muno?"
"Yes, there were some fate. I was appointed to be a honorary chevalier by Earl Muno after the incident."
"Hou, isn't that quite good!"

Viscount Belton misunderstands and claps my shoulder, bang bang, congratulating me.
This person should be a magician, but his way of rejoicing things is like a knight or a warrior. I wonder if people who use fire magic are all hearty?

"Don't be mistaken Belton. Sir Pendragon was elevated yesterday, he's a viscount like you now."
"W-what?!"

The viscount leaks out voice of surprise when the earl corrects him.
Apparently, he didn't connect that Sir Pendragon and Satou were the same person. Well, there was no way he'd thought that the peddler he knew would become a Mithril explorer.

"Master, we should go soon."
"Umu, right."

A butler-like old man who's in the same carriage as the earl warns the earl while holding a watch magic tool in one hand.

"People of Zena Squad. In light of your loyalty, I will not question the matter about you leaving your post without permission. I will provide rooms in the mansion. Relax yourself for a while before returning to the labyrinth city."
"Yes, we wish to express our gratitude."

Army-mode Zena-san sure is gallant.
Since the Earl and Viscount Belton went to the royal castle, I also went there after leaving Zena-san and the others in Earl Seryuu's mansion.
After the carriage takes me to the castle, it will go back to carry Zena-san and the others

back to Pendragon Mansion where Liza is waiting.

Today's Kingdom Conference--

It's over after the selection for the people in charge of Royal Capital's revival, and the report from the three order of knights departing to go to war with Bishtal Dukedom.

There were some three-hour recesses, but at that time, a lot of nobles came to promote their daughters and daughters of their family, so I was annoyed.
The nobles who did so weren't only upper-class ones who attend the kingdom conference, but also lower-class nobles who purposely came to the conference for that sake.

Nobles from the faction of Marquis Lloyd and Earl Houen protected me during the second recess, so it was peaceful, but they came asking which dishes I was going to bring out in the cooking contest with excited faces, so I couldn't get some rest after all.

I'm thinking of doing a banquet in the guest house where Earl Muno is staying once, in order to change their target.
As expected, Pendragon Mansion is too small to invite upper nobles.

13-3. Royal Academy

Arisa

"Pleased to meet you Chevalier Tachibana. I am the principal of the Royal Academy, Litou Maiya."

A dignified old woman greeted me from the other side of her work desk.
I've visited the Royal Academy in the Noble Street while taking the children along.

Her name seems strange to be of Shiga Kingdom.
I think the name is one that's often found on the western part of the continent.

I pass the letter that has been given by my beloved Master to the principal.
The letter of introduction was from Duke Oyugock so I had thought that there would be no obstacles, but I never thought we would meet face-to-face suddenly.

"I'm told that you will be entering our academy, but is it not just you, but also the children behind you?"

The principal raises her eyebrows when she sees the children behind me.

"Our academy requires students to be able to read and write, and do basic arithmetic in order to be enrolled here. Even if the recommendation comes from Duke-sama, if they don't have that much scholarly ability...."
"Tama, can do arithmatic and read and write too~?"
"Pochi too, she writes novels and she can perfectly calculate nanodesu."
"Me too~"
"I can do it too."

Tama, Pochi, Shiro and Crow answered the principal in turns.
It seems Mia isn't interested with the conversation, she's absorbed looking at the painting on the wall.

"Is it the same with the person over there?"
"Mwu?"

Mia who's been called turns her head, and her hood falls back down from the inertia of her twintails.

"E-elf-sama?! Are you perhaps an Elf-sama from Boruenan Forest?"
"Nn, Mia."

Mia nods toward the principal who's bent her body forward the desk in surprise.

The nobles we met for the past two days were all courteous but they acted normally, this person must be an elf-lover, no doubt bout it.

Along with Mia, we were able to enroll at the Royal Academy without problem.

◇

"--In the same way, there are various subjects other than the basic in our academy. Which subject do you wish to attend?"

Summarizing the principal's long explanation, this academy has six main schools; high-grade school, noble school, maiden school, knight school, magic school, and childhood school, along with 12 subjects.
It'll be a different story if we stay in the Royal Capital as permanent residents, but since we're only enrolling for a limited time, we decide to intrude upon three schools after consulting with her.

It's decided that Mia and me would be in the magic school, Pochi and Tama in the knight school, and Shiro and Crow to be in the childhood school.

I thought of enrolling into the maiden school for bridal training, or the high-grade school to study political science and economics, but my interest lies on the place where I can research magic after all.

Since our cheat Master can create a kingdom or an empire on his own if he wants, studying territory management and how to become an emperor are probably better, but I didn't go through it since doing it during limited enrollment would be half-baked.

Throwing Pochi and Tama alone to the knight school felt like some kind of flag, so I had decided to accompany them on the first day.
I should consult with Master tomorrow.

◇

I take Pochi and Tama along to the knight school guided by a teacher.
Only people who are recommended by nobles can enroll to this place.

"I'm sorry, but just in case, please do a simple test."
"Aye!"
"Pochi is good with test nanodesu!"
"What kind of test is it?"

I ask the muscle teacher.

"It's a simple thing for someone who aspires to become a knight. Simply take a sword and do practice-swinging with it. Please try swinging it ten ti--me?!"

Swoosh swoosh, Pochi and Tama are swinging the swords at speed where the swords' tips can't be seen while sitting.
The teacher is so surprised his jaw looks like it'll fall off.

I tell the two to be prudent and receive Pochi's sword.

--Oh, it's unexpectedly heavy despite how it looks.

I wonder if the center of gravity is on the tip?

My stats have been increased to the level of a normal knight through level up, but it doesn't seem like I can keep my posture while swinging it.

I secretly use [Power Assist] magic chantlessly.
It's a sub-type of the higher [Physical Reinforcement] for spy-use that our Master has made.

I swing the sword like practice-swinging of kendo.
My tension gradually goes up whenever I swing the sword.

Swords sure have this mysterious charm that would likely make you shout "Wooooo" huh.
I understand well how the two felt just now.

"Alright, Dame Tachibana has passed too."
"Thank you."

I return the sword to the teacher with composed face.
Feels like I'll suffer muscular pain if I don't get some massage when we get back.

Oh right! I'll have Master massage me stickly.
Of course, I have to massage Master back once it's over!

Guhehehe, doing as I please to a shota's body huh.
I'm boiling~.

"Arisa~?"
"Face, nanodesu."

The two who are looking at me from below poke my lips.
Oops, not good, be prim and proper, prim and proper.

◇

"Tama Kishresgalza."
"Pochi Kishresgalza nanodesu!"
"I am Arisa Tachibana. Everyone, please get along well with us."

The classroom is full of kids.
I guess most are around 13 years old?
As expected of knight apprentices, all of the kids have bulking muscles even though they're baby-faced, there's no one who attracts my attention.
There are around 30 people, but there are only two girls. One of them is a delicate girl that looks like a young lady, looking out-of-place here, but the other one is a girl that's better

build than boys.

The level differences are from 3 to 7. There are also non-standard kids whose levels are 11 and 15.
Most of the noble kids occupy the 7, thus they have relatively more skills.
Half have martial arts skills, and around 20% have magic skills.

"Fuhn, demi-humans and womens huh. Knight school's standard sure has fallen."

A handsome boy whose atmosphere feels like a young nobleman threw some template-like sarcasm.
And there's someone who reacts to that instantly.

"What did you say! Try saying it again. In the name of Kelten House, I challenge you to a duel!"

It's the delicate-looking girl from earlier.
Rather, why are you the one who's angry.

"Fighting is bad~"
"That's right nanodesu! We have to get along with each other nodesuyo. Bad nanodesu."

Tama and Pochi cut themselves between the two kids with Flickering Movement, flapping their hands to intermediate the two.

"....O, oy."
"Didn't these two just suddenly move?"
"Don't tell me, Flickering Movement?"
"Don't be stupid. If they can use Flickering Movement, they'll get scouted to the knight order instead of knight school."

The classmates lost their composures when they saw the two's transcendental-like techniques.
I looked at the muscle teacher thinking that he should quickly stop them, but he seems to find the students' independence interesting while folding his arms.

--Geez. How troublesome.

"Please leave it at that you two."

I arbitrate them in Tama's and Pochi's places as an adult myself.

"The young nobleman over there. I don't mind if you classify people by gender, but please stop discriminating them by it. Even women can be a master of wonderful swordsmanship like Ryouna-sama of Shiga Eight Swords."

I brought up the six-packs aunty from before against a kid who seems weak against authority like him so that he can't argue back.

Next, I turn toward the instantaneous-boiling young lady.

"We'd like to thank you the young lady of Sir Kelten for defending us."

This girl should have been rebuked for her own sake, but that's the job of the teacher.
Bringing that now would put her to shame, I can just point it out to her later when we're alone.

"R-Ryouna-sama is an exception! Men is stronger, and they excel in a fight! Aren't most of the Shiga Eight Swords men too!"

The boy took the wrong turn again, and bit back.
However, the one who replies him is the delicate girl.

"Ara, the one who broke Julberg-sama of that Shiga Eight Swords, 『Black Spear』 Liza-sama is a woman you know."

Pochi and Tama who heard words of praise for Liza-san begin to wear happy expressions on their faces.

"Liza strong~"
"That's right nanodesu. Liza is strong nodesu!"
"Wait, you girls! Add 'sama' honorific! That lady should have been conferred the rank of honorary earl equaling Shiga Eight Swords right about now."

The young lady scolds the two who praise Liza-san.

"Not that~?"
"It's not that nodesu."
"What do you mean by that!"

The two probably wanted to say that Liza-san had refused to become a Shiga Eight Swords, so she's not a honorary earl but a honorary baronetess, but it doesn't seem that they can convey it well.

"Please calm down. Liza Kishresgalza-sama has declined the invitation to become a Shiga Eight Swords. She has been given the rank of honorary baronetcy in the 『Great Audience Ceremony』 the other day."
"It's as if you've seen it firsthand--Kishresgalza?"

Oh, it seems she did hear Pochi's and Tama's introduction earlier.

"Yes, the three of us were present at the occasion. You might have noticed it, but these two are like little sisters to Kishresgalza-sama."
"....Liza-sama's little sisters?"

Geez, I'd likely bite my tongue if I don't get serious when I say Liza-san's family name.

The voice of the handsome boy whose existence was forgotten cuts in there.

"You girls, fight me! I'll apologize for my words earlier if I lose. Teacher, please the arrangement for the training center."
"Very well."

The muscle teacher nodded to the arrogant words of the boy, told everyone, "The first class is study by observation of the duel", and then guided the classmates to the training ground.

--Damn these muscle-brain bunch.

◇

"Now, come! The three of you can come at once."

The boy who's equipped with a shock-absorbing helmet and padding holds his wooden sword toward us and shouts.
There are five boys behind him scowling at us.

"Private Tama. I appoint you to be the vanguard."
"Roger~"
"Listen okay? Aim for the weapon. Mia is not here, so even if you make a mistake, don't hurt him okay."
"Aye aye sir~?"

I ask the dexterous Tama to finish it by destroying the opponent's weapon.
Of course with a low voice that can't be heard by the other party.

"To the front! Take your stance."

The boy holds the sword in knight style.
Tama is in natural posture.

"Begin!"

With the muscle teacher's signal, the boy stabs toward Tama while shouting.
That sure looks dangerous~. You'll get a big injury even with a wooden sword like that.

"Wooooooo!"

The boy's stab is sharp. His footworks is very fast it's hard to think it's the same boy.
The kids of the explorer training school can't be compared to him. I guess that's as expected of level 11.

--However, his opponent is just too bad.

"Tama is a captivating dancer~?"

Tama is evading the boy's stabs left and right with magnificent steps.

If it's Tama, she can probably do the same even against members of Shiga Eight Swords.

"Tama, do your best nanodesu!"
"Aye~"

Answering Pochi's support, Tama round slices the boy's sword with her own wooden sword.

"Wha"
"Secret sword, round slices dance~?"

Tama who's run past boy takes a strange victory pose.
It seems the boy loses his strength from the excessively absurd technique that cut his wooden sword to slices, he's sitting on the spot.

"Winner, Tama."

The classmates cheer with the muscle teacher's declaration.
Only a single cynical-looking boy leaves the training center behind the classmates while smiling smugly like "Hmph". It's the level 15 boy.
He would have become the rival if this were a school story, but unfortunately, it's unasked for.

◇

The followers of the boy challenged us one by one afterward, but Tama and Pochi alternately hurled their weapons, taking the victory.
The muscle teacher asked us not to break the equipment, so they refrained from round slicing them.

After the followers had all fallen, the big girl challenged, and then it turned into something like a class match somehow.

"Next~?"
"It's Pochi's turn this time nanodesu!"

Pochi who's holding a wooden sword look toward the classmates with a happy face, but there's no one who challenges back.
The young lady and the first boy challenged three times each, but it was an easy victory.

"Alright, today's class is over."

Once the muscle teacher declares so, several people with ragged breathing beat the ground while looking frustrated.
Ah, the frustrated faces of boys are nice aren't they~.
Use this frustration to grow! I'm cheering on you!

"Everyone, you should now understand that there's someone even higher on the top right? However, do not be discouraged okay? These two are special. They're real explorers who

have been risking their life in the labyrinth ever since they're small."

Apparently, muscle teacher made use of the occasion well.
Now the kids would probably be more diligent in their training with idealized image yet not getting ahead of themselves.
It's important to have a clear target after all.

But, with this the two should have been recognized and won't become the target of bullying, there are also several kids who look like they'll get along with the two too, so I won't complain.

In addition, the handsome boy who picked a quarrel with the two also apologized to the two properly.

Looking at his disorderly emotion while apologizing, I feel like it's enough to last me three meals.
Oh no~ I can't get enough of the school arc~

◇

"There are only strange dishes in that store, but they're mysteriously tasty."
"Sometimes they're bad tho'"
"But that mayo thing will absolutely become a habit ya' know?"

After the class is over, we were invited by the fourth son of a honorary chevalier, the big girl and a phanterkin boy to eat out.

....Still mayo huh. It stinks of a reincarnated or a teleported person.

Well, it's just like usual with the trouble though.

--Maybe because I'm thinking strangely like that, we encounter a strange scene.

"You dirty orphan, don't walk so brazenly in this place!"
"Souya-dono, please don't use violence. Shin is just doing chores in the school!"
"Don't mind me. Hit me if you want. I have to end my work quickly. Make it brief please."

The one doing the hitting is a slightly plump yet wastefully beautiful boy. With his black hair, if he's a bit thinner, his beauty would be comparable to Lulu.
His name is Asian-like, or rather, Japanese-like; Souya. He looks like a hero or a teleported person. His skill is only [Engraving]. 14 years old.

The one doing the protecting is our acquaintance.
It's the pink-haired princess of a small kingdom, Menea. She's not with her maids, probably because she's in the school. I think it's a bit too unsafe.

The boy who's getting hit is slim and has white hair, a handsome boy with a French-looking face. His name is Shin, like he's an earthling, but it's a name that's often found here in this

world so it's probably unrelated. His skill is only [One-handed Sword]. He's 14 years old just like the black-haired boy.

Still, it's a situation that would surely make you want to retort "You think this is shoujo manga!".

"Oy, it's His Highness again."
"That handyman really is often entangled with His Highness."
"He's probably upset to see the princess talking with the handyman."
"Ugly His Highness sure is persistent even though the princess hates him."

We heard such conversations from the upper classmen nearby.
Ugly His Highness? Perhaps that kid is also like Lulu, having aggregation of unfortunate parts?

"Fuhn, my hand is dirty now!"

The boy called His Highness arrogantly leaves while Princess Menea is scowling at him.

"Oh no! The blood--"
"It's alright. The handkerchief will get dirty."

Princess Menea who sees the blood flowing from the mouth of the boy who's been hit takes out a handkerchief and tries to wipe that blood with it.
The boy declines curtly and wipes it with his own hand.

--Kuh, what the heck is this shoujo manga space!

Is this the so-called "Note:Limited to good-looking men" thing.
Dammit, I should have been in that position since this is the school arc....

God why!

I curse at the love-comedy god in my heart.

Author's note:
Next time we'll be back with Satou's point of view. The second day of Royal Academy is planned after 2-3 episodes later.

●Profiles
【Menea】 The third princess of a small kingdom, Rumooku. A pink-haired beautiful girl. 17 years old.
【Rumooku Kingdom】 Once partnered with weaselkin to summon otherworld people.
【Kelten】 A marquis with great influence in the army.

13-4. New Year Special Training

Satou's here. I sometimes wish to go back to my school days when I'm busy with works, but I feel like I'll give up if I really get back to my school days since I'd be running out of money then.

◇

"Welcome back Master."
""""Welcome back""""

Returning from the Kingdom Conference, I'm welcomed by the butler and the maids who are lined up on the entrance way as I got off the carriage.
It's like I'm a royalty or a noble--wait, I am a noble.

"Master, Marientail-sama and her friends have come to visit you."
"Okay. Are they in the parlor?"
"Yes."
"Then I guess I'll go greet them before changing my clothes."

When I said so, one of the maids went to the parlor as a herald.
These commuting employees are all strangely capable. It might be good to call several loli maids in the labyrinth city to let them learn here.

I enter the door that's been opened by the butler, and go toward the parlor where Zena-san and the others are waiting.
As expected, the room feels cramped with 15 people inside.

I briefly greet back with "I'm back" to our girls who welcome me.
It seems they had some fun in the Royal Academy, they all look gleaming.

"I'm sorry for disturbing you. Satou-san.... umm, I have to call you Viscount-sama now don't I."
"Please call me Satou like always when we're not in public."

I tell so to Zena-san who looks a bit lonely.
Even though it's only natural to differentiate between public and private matters, I don't really like to be treated distantly by a friend.

"--Is it alright?"
"Yes, please call me like you've always been."
"Yes!"

Zena-san replied with a smile that was like the sun.
As ever, Zena-san's expression when she's like this is quite nice.

"I'll change my clothes immediately, so let's have a meal together. Zena-san and her friends

are eating with us right?"
"Um, that is..."

I thought that Zena-san and the others would naturally dine with us, but it seems they've been invited to a dinner with Earl Seryuu.
Looks like it's also for them to report their progress in Labyrinth City.

"That's unfortunate. You're going to stay in the royal capital for a while right? Then there will another chance. Tomorrow I'll make royal court dishes using a whole sakura salmon okay."
"Ro-royal court dishes! Please! I'm looking forward to it."

While having such conversations, I see Zena-san and the others off as they are going back to the Earl's mansion.
Lilio got some kind of parcel from Lulu. It seems to be an assortment of new year dish which the girls like.

◇

As for the dinner of that day, the royal court dishes which have been taught to Lulu in the royal castle are lined up on the dining table.
They're all luxurious dishes. There are some new year dishes leftover so it's kind of wasteful, but we can just eat them for breakfast tomorrow.

"--Pochi plucked it, then Pochi threw it, Pochi plucked it then Pochi threw it, it was a great success nodesu!"
"Tama too had great successes~?"

I'm listening to Pochi and Tama who are reporting about their peerless matches against their classmates of the knight school.
I asked Arisa with my eyes, "Did you let them hurt anyone?"

"Don't look at me with those eyes please. I had told to the two to only attack the weapons, so it was alright. There should be less challengers tomorrow, and the two understand how to hold back from their training with Pendora guys, so it's alright I said."
"It's alrite~"
"That's right nanodesu. Master (teacher) taught Pochi to go easy on weak people nodesu."

Oops, that's a problematic remark.

"Pochi, you must not say that your friends are『Weak people』okay."
"Pochi can't nanodesu? Master (teacher) often said it nodesu."

U~n, I guess that's because it's natural for the elven master teachers to look down in regards of martial art.

"Then why don't we imagine it."
"Imagine~?"

"Nanodesu?"

I look at the two with "let me see" face.

"Imagine if a martial artist whom Pochi and Tama don't know look down on you before you even fight, 'You guys are weak. You're worthless', what do you think?"
"Pochi is not weak nodesu!"
"Tama too is strong~?"

The two who obediently imagined what I said and became angry.

"However, if the martial artist said, 'Hmph, weak people bark the loudest' without even listening to you two, what will you do?"
"Fight~?"
"Pochi will challenge him to a match nodesu."

Yup, I'm glad that the two react as I've led them to.

"That's right. If you two said『Weak』to your friends, don't you think they will get angry like with the imagined martial artist earlier?"

The two cross their arms and imagine it hard with difficult faces.

"They will absolutely get angry nodesu!"

Pochi is trembling while looking shocked.

"Tama won't say weak~"
"Pochi too won't say it nodesu!"

I affirm the honest words of the two with "That's right", and pat their heads.
Now they won't hurt anyone nor get into some strange troubles.
Liza is also nodding for some reason, but I think there's a merit to provoking your opponent in actual battles you know?

I had Arisa to report about people and nobles in the knight school whom we should be careful with.
There are a lot of interesting capable people, doesn't seem like you'll get bored in that school.

◇

"Then, was it fun too for you Mia?"
"Nn."

Mia nods, and then puts a peeled orange into her mouth.
Huh? That's all?

....Geez, it's very like taciturn Mia.

Tomorrow Arisa is going to the magic school where Mia is anyway, I guess I can just hear it from Arisa.

"There wasn't any problem in the royal castle's kitchen right?"
"Y-yes. It was unfortunate that we weren't with Master, but I was able to learn various things like techniques, the way to see through ingredients, and knacks."

Seeing through ingredients is probably needless once she gets the Item Appraisal skill, but the orb will be granted the day after the auction is over.
I'm glad that Lulu wasn't being bullied or something, I'll be learning those techniques from Lulu later myself.

"Lulu was taken good care of so I report."
"Thank you Nana."

Lulu might have been bullied if she was alone, but since Nana said it frankly, she was probably really taken good care of.

Lastly I asked Liza where she guided Zena-san and the others to.

"I mainly guided them to places for eating out and arms shops."
"....It's really like Liza-san."

Just as Arisa has muttered, it's very like Liza.
But since it's Zena-san and the others, they might be happy about it instead.

"Then you should show them around the shopping street where we went together. There are many pretty accessories and clothes there."
"Certainly."

I would have bought them accessories if I went with them, but please treat it as a preview for now.
I sure want to show Zena-san and her friends around the city at least once during their stay here.

◇

"Oh right, the pink princess from before was there too."

The person Arisa said while grinning is probably the princess of Rumooku Kingdom who has anime-like pink hair, Princess Menea.

"That should be the case considering Princess Menea is a student of the Royal Academy. However, don't use 'pink princess', call her Princess Menea normally."
"Ye~s"

As I chide her, Arisa replies back like a child.

"And then, and then, Princess Menea was being contested by two handsome boys just like in shoujo manga."

'Gehehe', so Arisa laughed, but even when that girl met me, she said some flowery words like "Fated person" or something, so I can't necessarily deny it.

"Hee, she sure is popular."
"What's with that disinterested reaction."

What kind of reaction did you expect coming from me.

"Then you see, the real issue is after that."

Arisa changes her posture and leans forward on the kotetsu.

"One of them, the plump handsome boy was called『His Highness』."

--His Highness huh. It's the same word as the demon lord spirit-dweller whom the [Light of Liberty] executives were saying, but....

"Was he not a normal noble? What's his name?"
"Err, he was called Souya."

Fumu, it's a Japanese-like name.
I found him immediately when I searched the map.

He lives in a wealthy area but it's not in the noble street.
I check his birthplace in the note column while also comparing it with the people directory I got from the royal castle as Nanashi.

"Apparently, he's really a descendant of the royal family. He seems to be the bastard son of the previous king and a merchant's daughter."

The mansion where Souya-kun lives is of his merchant mother.

Just in case, I checked various documents from the Prime Minister and found a hit on the firm's name.
It's a merchant family who secures their livelihood by doing trades with foreign countries, they own several sea-faring ships in the foreign trade city. It seems their main customers are the countries on the western part of the continent, and the weaselkin empire on the eastern part of the continent.

The reason why they're recorded in the document is because they had a deal with the earl house that was executed due to treason from the case before, and supplied imported goods--such as accessories and books from Holy Kingdom Parion to the house of nobles that idolized the easy-going occult group, [Wind of Liberty].
It seems they also supplied stuffed goods and artworks from foreign countries to the house of Marquis Kelten.

Though the prime minister's subordinates have probably investigated them, I mark Souya-kun and the higher-ups of the merchant house since they seem slightly suspicious.

Incidentally, I also tried searching for people, demons, or people possessed by demons with [Unknown Skill], but I got no hit.

◇

"Ku-Kuro-sama, we have been waisting for you."

The manager who looks tense unusually fumbled her words of greeting.
However, I, who had teleported to Echigoya Firm with [Unit Arrangement], stopped my train of thought due to the unexpected scene.

The executives of Echigoya Firm are lined up before me.
That's fine and all. I was the one who called them in the first place.

--However, why are they all half-naked?

The Manager is wearing laced nightgown with exposed skin, her important parts are barely covered by the laces, but they all would be exposed if she just moved.
The noble daughters behind her too, although theirs are more docile, they're wearing sensational clothes that don't differ much with the manager's.

Porina is wearing somewhat calmer clothes, but the soft-looking dress shows her body line clearly, it doesn't look like clothes you're wearing for work.

Nell has night clothes that are separated on top and the bottom. Normally these kind of clothes aren't sexy, but they produce peculiar eroticism in this group.

Tifaliza can't look at me directly. Her icy beauty is dyed in vermilion color, her embarrassed gestures trying to hide her body is too dangerous. If the two of us were alone, I could have involuntarily push her down.

Good grief, it's "What kind of Eroge is this?" world.

I coughed once to clear my throat.
....Calm down Satou. No wait, I'm Kuro right now.

"Manager, today you sure are wearing some wonderful clothes."
"Y-yes. We were all called by Kuro-sama, so everyone did their best to show off."

--『Tomorrow night, I'm giving you a special duty after the night time.』
--『It'll be over in a moment, but there's a high possibility that you won't be able to work afterward.』

They misunderstood those lines huh?!
They interpreted special duty as night attendant, and the latter line as not being able to

move afterward eh....

I'm slightly attracted to leave the misunderstanding and do a group one, but let's not.
Even if I hide behind the rationale of failing as a proprietor were I put my hands on my important employees, carelessly doing it could drown me in carnal desire turning me into a degenerate.

I'm limiting the venting of these hands toward the professional onee-sans that won't turn into degenerate later on.
If I have a girlfriend, I'd flirt with her instead though.

Now then, let's end these girls' anxiety here.

"It seems you have misunderstood. I do not intend to force myself upon you girls. Special duty is about another thing. Change into your work clothes since it's going to take some time. Wear shoes that are easy to move around."

Leaving the Manager and the other who subtly look like they feel like running away, I move to my second villa in the underground labyrinth.
Waiting idly is wasteful, so I head toward the live-box for the power-leveling today.

I run to the area where the live-box is located, and arrive at the hall where it is.
Monsters are crawling out from the [Gushing Holes] on the walls nearby the live-box, so I clean them up for the sake of safe power-leveling.

I put log huts on the corners of the hall from my storage in order to prevent [Gushing Holes] structurally.
I activate the holy monument magic tools I've installed on the huts to create small barriers.
Red magic circles are invoked, the area about 10 meters from the holy monuments become safe areas where monsters can't get close.
They're not physical barriers, so they can't completely shut out the monsters, but monsters can't get close to it if they're just normal monsters.

After checking the entry of [Unit Arrangement] on the menu, I register this place as a home ground.
I'll do this method on various places in preparation of moving ahead of time.

I connect the holy monuments to magic furnace and start it. The output is only second-rate, but it's more than enough for supplying the holy monument with magic power.
I'll make it like the barrier pillars on villages when I create other home grounds next time.
Since that type don't need magic furnace.

◇

"T-this place is?! --Labyrinth?"
"That's right. It's Area 277 of the middle-layer of the labyrinth."

Everyone's expression is hardened when I simply reply the manager's question.

I guess they would be scared considering these girls have one-digit levels and are wearing everyday clothings.

"Do not worry. I have removed dangerous monsters."

When I gently told so, everyone fell down on the ground.
Apparently they've lost their strengths.

Looks like I'd better stop doing this kind of surprise.

"Follow me. I will make you girls hunt the preserved live-box monsters ahead and get your levels raised."

We climb the stair on the wall of the live-box, and reach the place where we can see the content of the live box.
Inside the live box are the monsters that have greatly multiplied--[Maze Cockroaches] eating the fodder monsters that are in awful states
To be honest, the spectacle is like in a dream.

"Your pride as an explorer might not allow it, but this is an order. I'll forcefully make you do it even if you don't want to."

I take out weapons from my Storage and give it to the Manager, Nell and Porina.

"This is? Is it a wand?"
"That's right. It's called Spray Gun, but it's the same type as the fire wand and lightning wand."

It looks like a shotgun with a truncated barrel. The place for the cartridge is loaded with Fire stones and Lightning stones, the element can be changed as needed.
When I was making a certain thing with converging ability half-heartedly, it shot out spray-like net lightning and flame instead.

It looks exactly like a gun, but it's classified as a wand.
Its killing power is weak, so it can only be used as a distraction for power-leveling.

"Everyone shoot toward the center of the live-box in turns. Change with the person behind you once you shot."
""""YES!""""

With unexpectedly good replies, everyone takes the gun and pulls the trigger as instructed.

"Kuro-sama, the lightning is spread, it's not very effective."
"Do not mind it. It's fine."

Manager who looks baffled steps back, changing with the next person.
This time I've prepared three type of cartridges, [Ice], [Wind], and [Lightning]. If things go well, I plan for them to earn the skill for each element.

Just in case, I had let them put their hands into my Item Box before they shot the guns. We're lucky if they get the skill with this, but there's no loss either way.

Furthermore, I make several of them who have experiences studying magic to use Magic Scrolls to invoke attack magic.

"Kuro-sama, everyone has completed their turns."
"Alright, this will be dangerous, so everyone get back to the stairs."

After checking that everyone has stepped back, I exterminate the [Maze Cockroaches] with [Fire Storm].

"W-what great flame...."
"Is that advanced magic?"
"Yet it was done chantlessly--"

Putting aside the surprised executives, I open the map to check everyone's status.

--Oops, I went too far.

The Maze Cockroaches earlier were only level 7 each, so I thought that it would be fine even if there were a bit too many, but it seems they had propagated to more than 1000.
There are a lot of executives, so it's been reduced somewhat, yet all of them have leveled up to 16.
Porina who was originally high-leveled, the Manager and her two adjutants became level 17 with my rash method of leveling up.

"--Huh? Power feels like entering me somehow ssu."
"I feel something too...."

Starting with Nell whose level was the lowest, the executives began to talk about their bad condition one by one.
You'll get level up intoxication if you level up by more than 10 of course.

Using [Magic Hands], I support the executives who look like they would fall down the stairs, and then teleport to Echigoya Firm's strategy meeting room with [Unit Arrangement].

"Good work. The special training for today is over."
"Kuro-sama, my body feels strange you see ssu."
"That's only the symptom of level up. You'll feel like usual once you get some rest."

I answer Nell who seems energetic despite looking tired.

"T-that wasn't a lie of some drunkards was it."
"Then...., maybe I've leveled up to 10?"
"....No way, that can't be true."

Despite looking tired, the executives can't seem to hide their excitement from leveling up.

They should become around level 30 if we continue for about seven days. If their levels get that high, they probably won't get rolled up in a situation like the other day.

Among the girls who have leveled up, five learned magic skills, one learned Item Box skill. It's safe to say that the result is more than anticipated.
None of our girls learned Item Box skill even after they got to level 50, the luck is on our side this time.

I can't leave the girls who can't move their bodies as it is, so I carry them to the nap room and the parlor of the main building, and let them sleep there.
For some reason, everyone wanted it to be princess carry, so I complied, but the executives' tensions were strange.
I wonder if princess carry is that nice?

My business today is over once I carry the lucky Tifaliza who learned Item Box skill to her room far behind.

"....Kuro-sama."

I let her who's sleep talking like that to sleep, and leave the room.

"--Coward"

I heard that faint monologue with Attentive Ears skill, but I pretended not to hear it and went to the night district alone.
The technique of the professional onee-san was wonderful after all.

13-5. At The Royal Castle

Satou's here. Just when you think troublesome things and problems are going to end, more of them come.
I think saying, "I took care of the bugs", during the final stage of development is a flag.

◇

"By the way, has Sir Pendragon decided on your first wife?"

It's Toruma who brought that subject up when we're in the middle of the Kingdom Conference recess.
Since he said some inappropriate things, nobles who are into little girls are glaring at me with murderous eyes from a distant table, and even the gluttonous nobles of Duchy Capital are looking complicated.

By the way, the reason why a honorary baronet like him is in this place is because he came to deliver a message for Viscount Shimen.

"I don't intend to get married for the time being."

I tell him honestly.
I do really want to make Aze-san my wife, but since elves are fundamentally very patient, I feel that she won't take me seriously unless I persist at it for at least 10 years.

"You can't do that do you? You're a permanent noble now, not a generation-long honorary noble, so by the kingdom's law, if you don't have a child within a year, you have to marry another woman if I'm not mistaken. My older brother has even got to his fourth wife after all."

--Are you serious?!

What's with that bad law.

It might be needed in this world where death comes easy, but I'd like to have free will in regards to marriage at least.

Toruma's story still continues, it seems it's normal for upper nobles to have three wives, and besides the legal ones, most of them have around five mistresses.
There are only a handful of upper nobles who only have a wife, including Earl Muno.

Real world harem huh....

I'm amazed that they can keep their stamina--ah I see, so that's the reason why Echigoya's vitality supplements are selling that well.

Even though I've set the price to be such a rip-off, the supply in the Royal Capital have all ben sold out.

"If the Royal Family don't ask you to take a wife from them or something, then take Karina as your wife please. I know that Sir Pendragon likes younger girls, but I think it's better for the first wife to be older."
"Wait Baronet Shimen. Do not be forceful."

Marquis Lloyd stopped Toruma who had started to promote Lady Karina.
As expected of old man's wisdom. He's not just a glutton nobl--

"By the way, Sir Pendragon, the girls of our house are famous for their fertility you see."

--I take it all back.

You're going to act like Toruma too huh.

"Toruma oji-sama, please don't trouble Satou-san so much."

Sera who's attending to Duke Oyugock came to help me while smiling gracefully.
Even though she was just having a chat with the female officials, she's a good child who takes care of her friend.

Sera sits right next to me.

....Isn't she a bit too close?

"Right, Satou-san."

It's the precious life boat after all. Let's ride on the stream.

"Yes, I never thought that I would become a permanent noble in the first place, so I haven't though of marriage yet."

As urged by Sera, I told so to everyone.
Toruma seemed to understand that, he stopped trying to be a matchmaker.
I wonder if Sera is happy that her mediation gone well, she's sipping her tea while smiling broadly.

◇

Now then, after thinking this calmly, the thing that's needed is having a heir.
Then there's no need for it to be a biological child in particular. I can just adopt a suitable child to succeed the house of Pendragon.

Since I felt better now, I start to listen carefully to the topic of discussion of the Kingdom Conference that I had been ignoring.
In order to secure the material needed for the royal castle's reconstruction, the nobles are debating whether to confiscate the material from merchants who are buying up goods, or to

import them from the neighboring territories.

--Oops, that reminds me, I haven't said anything about the material matter to the Manager.

At the start of the lunch recess, I contact Echigoya Firm with [Telephone], and tell her to select several executive staff that will be dispatched to secure material.

While I was doing so, the morning section of the Kingdom Conference ended, and it became the time for the lunch break.
I'm invited to have a lunch together with the nobles of Duchy Capital, but I have to refuse them since I've been invited by the prime minister beforehand.

It's said that the prime minister will always dine together with anyone who's become an upper noble, and then decide whether that person has the social aptitude or not.

"Viscount Pendragon-sama, please follow me."

The prime minister's chamberlain whom I remember seeing has come to pick me up so I follow him.
We met when I was acting as Kuro though, so I can't exactly talk familiarly with him.

While feeling slightly awkward, I was led to a dining room with good lighting.
The prime minister and his cohorts will come afterward, so I'm watching the scenery from the window to kill the time.

I can see the big sakura tree from here well.

"--It appears you like sakura trees."
"Yes, I quite like them."

It was the prime minister that call out to me, followed by some officials.
When did he come.

Still, the atmosphere feels like some kind of interview even though we're supposed to have a meal.

"Sit down. The dishes today are made by chefs whom we have invited from other countries. I do not mind if you don't finish it if it doesn't suit your taste."

--Hohou, that sounds fun.

The appetizer is salad with boiled shrimps as the topping.
I thought it was just some plain salad, but the moment it entered my mouth, I got done in by the out-of-ordinary dressing.
Just when I thought it was dressing, turned out it's sauce with honey as the base.
It's quite delicious if I just forget my prejudice, but it has quite an impact.

The prime minister is eating calmly, but I know from my experiences of meeting him many

times as Nanashi.
He must be absolutely enjoying my surprised reaction.

Next, some clear white silky soup come out.
The aroma makes it seem like corn soup, but I can't let my guard down.

Considering my experience just now, I put the soup slightly to my mouth--sour!

The aftertaste isn't bad, but it's hard for people who aren't good with sour things.

"Do the foreign dishes suit your taste?"
"Yes, they taste quite titillatingly tasty."

This isn't lip service, but what I truly think.
I'll go see the chefs after the meal and ask them to tell whose country dishes are these.

Like so, the gap between the appearance and the taste of the prime minister surprise menu were all present, but on the whole, they were delicious so I don't have any complain.
I enjoy various dishes while replying the prime minister's questions with inoffensive answers.

And then the main menu that comes out is a green caterpillar the size of a piglet.
It smells like a pork teriyaki.

The waiter cuts the crust of the caterpillar and serves it on a plate.
Lastly, the viscous gel-like body of the caterpillar is spread on pieces of the crust like sauce.

....Wait, wouldn't it have been better if you did this before you take it out?

Well, this must be delicious too.
If it was the previous me who hadn't been living in the labyrinth city, I would have absolutely refused it, but now that I've eaten various monster meat in the labyrinth, this much is within my tolerance level--probably.

Let's believe the prime minister's tongue.

I make up my mind and put the crust wrapped in the sauce as instructed by the waiter.

--Delicious.

Despite the crunchy texture of the crust, the inside is juicy, it's a relatively interesting food texture.
The salty-sweet sauce matches it well too.

"--Pass."

The prime minister who seems to be in good mood said so to the officials on his sides, but I heard it.
Oh no, so this was some kind of test?

I should have frowned in the middle of the way, and not eaten the last dish.
I got absorbed enjoying eating the delicious dishes, I had involuntarily eaten them all.

I can't call Marquis Lloyd and Earl Haku gluttonous nobles like this.

◇

After the lunch with the prime minister, I have about 30 minutes before the Kingdom Conference start in the noon, so I stealthily go to Echigoya Firm.

"Kuro-sama, I have selected these three for the dispatch."

There three girls with their belongings ready near the Manager.
These girls have reliable skills such as [Market Price] and [Negotiation]. They shouldn't have it before, so it must be because of the power-leveling yesterday.

"Good choices."

I thank the Manager who has arranged this in short time, and instruct them their objectives from now on.

"Your mission is to purchase building materials and secure temporary branches of Echigoya Firm. Buy the building material cheaply with local delivery. You do not have to think about the transportation. I do not mind even if the buildings of the temporary branches aren't that great, pick one that can be turned over by the end of the month."
"""Yes! Kuro-sama."""

I take the girls who replied energetically, and move to the Duchy Capital with Unit Arrangement.
I drop off one of them here, and then I go to Muno City with Unit Arrangement once again, and drop off another girl here.

We moved to the last location, Kuhanou City by return teleporting twice.

"Ku-Kuro-sama, please let me rest for a bit, I feel dizzy."

Apparently, Return teleport feels more nauseating than Unit Arrangement.
She wants me to stay with her until she feels better, but the noon conference is going to start in about 20 minutes.

I carry the noble daughter to a nearby teahouse, borrow a private room and let her sleep there.

"Kuro-sama…."
"Rest for a while here. I will come here in the night, so finish your duty until then."

I tell so as business-like as possible to the girl who's looking up while speaking in curious sexy voice.

Your reason gets dangerous when you're approached by a twenty-year old beautiful woman in a room you know.

◇

『Like I said! The [Dragon's Eye] have been stolen!』
"Please calm down His Highness."

When I was heading toward the afternoon conference, I heard some interesting words from the voice coming from the other side of the corridor, so I stopped on the way.

....[His Highness] again huh. I feel a bit sick with it.

There are a Leprechaun boy who's using fairy language to speak, and an official who's speaking fairy language in broken language, seemingly barely able to.
The Leprechaun boy is wearing gaudy white clothes, and over the top ornaments as if matching the clothes.
As said by the official, the leprechaun is a royalty of the leprechaun kingdom on the western part of the continent. His actual age is 365 year old, so he's not as young as he looks.

In addition since the fairy language is the common language of fairykin, which is also called the low-rank version of elf language, I can understand it without problem. It feels like unsophisticated words of the graceful elf language.

『Is there any problem?』
『Oh! You seem to know fairy language. The [Dragon's Eye] in my room has been stolen!』

『Is it some kind of jewel?』
『It's not! [Dragon's Eye] is an orb that's been passed down in our kingdom. It grants the user the appraisal eyes the dragons have that can see through all things in universe.』

--It's orb this time huh.

Lately I've been reading too much into anything that's related to demons.
If this keeps up, I could end up burning any whithered silver grass I see with Laser.

I pull myself together, and convey his words to the official.

"It's another case of thievery!"

I incline my head in puzzlement hearing the official.

"Are there many thievery in the royal castle?"

As I ask so to the official, I search the [Dragon's Eye] on the map, but it doesn't exist anywhere.
I wonder if it's either teleported away or kept in Item Box.

"...N-no, it's nothing like that."

The official tries to gloss over it disorderly.

『What are you speaking about! It's the treasure of our kingdom! Dispatch the search party immediately!』

The leprechaun boy appeals desperately, so I postpone the thing about the other thievery, and tell the official the boy's request.

The [Dragon's Eye] is an artifact that grants temporary [Item Appraisal] skill to the user, when the user is under the effect of this artifact, his eyes will be split vertically, and turn yellow as the name implies.
From talking with the boy, I understand that the user can use the skill three times during a day, and the effect can last for one hour for each use.

After finishing various arrangements, I asked the official who said the remark earlier, and got to know that there had been three cases of thievery in the past two days in the royal castle.
The damages are all items that looked like Orbs.

--Orb-like items huh.

Before, the sakuramochi demon or the scout of [Light of Liberty] said that they needed Orbs for the hatching of [His Highness].
I wonder if it's the handiworks of people related to [His Highness].

The orbs that were in the royal castle's treasury are being kept by me until the start of the Auction.
I wonder if the bunch who don't know that are picking orb-like things?

Still, just who is this [His Highness]?

As one expect of a large kingdom, the people who can be called [His Highness] number in more than 100, so putting markers and tracking them is a bit too much works.
There was nothing suspicious when I searched the map yesterday after my talk with Arisa.
Currently, there is no remnant of [Wings of Liberty] and [Light of Liberty] that revere demon lords in the royal capital.

If this were manga or light novel, you can probably wring it out from people who get in contact with the main character, but such a rule can't be applied to reality.
If it is, the bastard child prince with Japanese face called Souya whom Arisa came across to should be [His Highness].

I've told about the remarks of the Sakuramochi demon and the [Light of Liberty] to the king and the prime minister, so I'll leave it to them find out who [His Highness] is. I'll try to set up a trap and see if I can catch the culprit.

While pondering about the best trap to use for it, I slip into the second division of the noon Kingdom Conference barely in time.

13-6. Royal Academy (2)

Arisa

Together with Mia, I go through the academy's gate.

"Misanalia-sama, we have been waiting for you."
"Morning."

The principal who was waiting at the academy's gate took Mia away while I was blanking out in amazement.
After they parted without waiting for me, a handsome 30s teacher who was beside the principal stepped forward beside me.

"Dame Tachibana, please come over here. I'm Hebin a senior teacher. I will be guiding you."
"Please take care of me, Hebin-sensei."

His face which has the visage of sorrow matches very well with his sombre voice.
The peculiar way his relaxed voice sounds is nice.

Said in novel's word, it would be called [Nekonadegoe].

While thinking such stupid thing, I am guided to enter the school building.
Contrary to Hebin-sensei's cruel-looking face, he seems to be the type that can pay attention, he walks while matching my walking pace.

"Please sit over there, I'll bring tool to measure your magic power."
"Yes, Sensei."

I was brought to a splendid room that seems to be a parlor, and then I sit on the fluffy sofa.
Even though I'm sitting gracefully, my mind can't keep calm from the word [Magic Power Measurement].

It will be with a magic crystal, and then it'll explode and then they'll be surprised like, "What enormous magic power!".
Kuffuffufuu~, school arc has to start with magic power OP-ness after all!

◇

"Four star it is. That's quite an amount of magic power. As expected of Misanalia-sama's friend."

Hebin-sensei read the value on the measuring equipment and then wrote it on the school entry document.

--Huh? Doesn't the measuring equipment have too high of a tolerance?

As if answering my doubt, Hebin-sensei muttered.

"The measuring equipment for new students was broken by Misanalia-sama, so we borrowed the original measuring equipment made by Ancient King Yamato from the royal castle."

Ah~ So Mia broke it first huh~.
I guess that'd be so. Mia has fifty percent more magic power than mine so it's only natural.
Sheesh, it should have been the cliche for me to surpass the amount of magic power for ordinary person, surprising them, but Mia did it ahead of time.

I-I should bring our cheat Master and show them an amount of magic power enough to break the original measuring equipment--wait, I guess that's impossible.
Our Master would never do such conspicuous thing.

"Do not be disheartened."

Maybe because I was silent, Hebin-sensei followed up with slightly gentle voice.

"Ordinary new students mostly get one or two star. Even among the teachers, only Principal and me who have four star. You should feel proud."
"Thank you very much, Hebin-sensei"

The principal's level is 43, and this sensei's is 41.
My MP is 890, so five star is probably when it's more than 1000.

As for Mia's evaluation--

"Misanalia-sama is five star. It's a new record after the era of Ancient King Yamato and seven generations of great men."

--Like that, as if she's a cheat main character.
She's ordinary compared to our Master who's out of common sense, but Mia is quite amazing herself.

And also, there's no elemental judgment for this kind of measurement.
Because we have Yamato Stone they said. Good grief, there's not enough romance here~.

And then, we change the place and now it's a practical exam.

"Then please destroy that target with magic."

Alright! Time to redeem my honor!

Let alone the target, maybe this Arisa-chan should show off her power by one-shotting the barrier of this practice room with [Inferno].

It should be fine if I just use space magic chantlessly to prevent damage on the surrounding, right.

"I'm saying this just in case, I'll also observe your precision, so I'll subtract your point if you destroy anything besides the target, please be careful."

--Kuh, someone did it already huh.

Can't be helped.
I'll go with Technical Arisa.

"■ ■■ ■■■ ■■ ■ Multiple Fire Dance"

Small fireballs are produced one by one on the tip of my wand.
All 16 fireballs fly to the target in accordance to my precise control.

Each of the fireballs splits into four shots along the way, in total, there are 64 fire shots raining upon the target.
The magic is created by Master for suppressing mob, so each of the shots has low power. It can't even defeat a demi-goblin.

However, 64 shots hit the target as I aimed.

"Splendid. To think you'd draw sakura petal on the target with the holes--"

As the result of making Hebin-sensei impressed I've been admitted to take the special class where the elites gather.
Mia must be there too, I didn't confirm it though.

◇

The class Hebin-sensei took me only has 10 students. There are half of the number of students on average compared to the other classes I saw when we were walking here.
The students' ages are from 10 to 18 year old, 16 year old on average.
The kids of this kingdom start their change to become old men when they're 12 year old, so there's only one precious shota here.

The average level is 9, the highest is a flame magician kid at level 19. The second best is a lightning magician kid at level 15.
The reason why their levels are higher than the kids of the knight school is probably because they can gain experience from behind in safety.

Mia isn't in the room.
Instead I see a familiar pink-haired princess sitting.

She sent a smile to me, so I nodded back to her.
If she's in this class, that means she's excellent despite her problematic behavior with men.

--Kuh, damn you riaju.

I introduce myself as urged by Hebin-sensei.

It seems I need to tell my name and the element I'm good at.

"My name is Arisa Tachibana. I'm fond of fire magic--"

I would remember the pain from my previous life if I introduced myself with impact, so I finished it with a very safe one.

The flame magician boy and the lightning magician young man said, "What, just a fire magician huh", but I completely ignored them. These kind of classmates exist in every class it seems.
Moreover, flame and lightning magic are simply magic whose offensive power are noticeable, it's not like they're higher tier of magic.
By the way, around half of the class members can use basic elemental magic.
Earth, Explosion, Water, Ice, Flame, Wind, Lightning, Force, Summoning, and Soul, there are more than one kid that can use Earth, and the Ice magician can use Soul magic.

Hebin-sensei scolds the boy who said the problematic remark, "There is no tier in magic."
The boy seems to live a pampered life, he apologizes frustratingly while looking disgruntled.

I'm more interested with the glasses shota boy rather than the deteriorated former-boy.
There are two vacant seats in the classroom. One of them is probably Mia's seat, the vacant seat on the front row is beside that shota boy.
That's probably Mia's seat and mine is probably going to be the furthest back beside the flame magician boy....

However, Hebin-sensei points at the front-row seat.

"Tachibana-kun, you can use that seat."

--You serious dood!

The voice in my mind is raised in joy with underling tone to Hebin-sensei unexpected words.
Of course, I keep my appearance graceful.

"Yes, Sensei."

When I said, "Please take care of me" while smiling at the glasses-shota, he sheepishly nodded while his cheeks were turning red.

Kuh, this is it!
It's the legendary techniqueeeeee!

School arc has to be like this after all!

"A-Arisa-kun? I don't know what's happening, but please calm down."
"I-I'm sorry."

Kuhhaaa....I failed.

I got too worked up and inadvertently stood up. It might even came out loud even.

The glasses boy is pulling away even though I had made a good impression.
I hurriedly tried to gloss it over by acting ladlylike, but it wasn't too effective.... Damnit.

◇

When I'm thinking the way to redeem myself, some noise of people talking are coming from the hallway.
The door is opened, and then the principal and some kind of researcher-looking men and women enter the room.

--And then, the one who's being surrounded by them is Mia.

"Arisa."

Mia raises her hand lightly and calls me.
The line of sights in the classroom are gathered to me. The only people who aren't surprised are the principal, Hebin-sensei and Pink-san.

The principal explains to everyone that Mia and me are acquainted while I'm waving back at Mia.

In the meantime, around five men who seem to be the school's staff members are putting desks and chairs inside the classroom.
The principal and the researchers sit on those chairs.

"Then, please Mia-sensei."
"Nn."

--Sensei?

As urged by the principal, Mia begins the lesson as a teacher.
Apparently, Mia is too good, she's become not a student, but a teacher.

Mia.... what a frightening child.

Now then, after the trite is over, I watch Mia's lesson. I feel like I'm doing a class visit.

The school's lesson is like in modern Japan, using blackboard to write the material.
However, the blackboard seems to be a magic tool invented by Ancient King Yamato, if you put magic power into your wand, it then can leave white line like chalk on the blackboard. The production cost is too high, so only Royal Academy has them.

Mia's lesson is done in one-word just as I thought it would be.

Once she's finished demonstrating, she says "Read."
She waits until the students have finished reading, and then she explains while pointing with her long wand, "Basis", "Formula", "Stabilizing Circuit", "Convergence", "Invocation".

"Mia-sama, how about that part?"
"Extension."

Mia answer the question of the man in white robe.
He seems to be a staff member of Royal Academy, he understands with just that and then writes some kind of note.

The majority of the students don't seem to understand, so Hebin-sensei whispers something to Mia.
Mia nods and then beckons me.

"Arisa. Come."

Mou, oh Mia, it can't be helped then~.
I stand up while feeling like an "oh dear" main character, and merrily go to the teacher's desk.

"Then I'll explain in place of Mia."

I tell so, and then various eyes gather to me.

"First, about this wavy thing, this is needed for magic practitioners during the activation of magic for the changing effect of the reaction from the supplying of magic power and thought control. I see some magic books cutting this part in order to raise the spell efficiency, but if you do that, you'll lose the additional room for the run-time control code, and lose its versatility, so be careful okay. Also, you might have known this already, but the explanation for this 'Extension' is written in the Magic Explanation Dictionary by Professor Jib Cloud, so people who heard it for the first time can read it. I think it's also written in the magic book of the sage Trazayuya, but Jib-tan's dictionary is the most detailed, so--"

The students are desperately writing on their notebook while straining their ears to hear my detailed explanation.
It's only the flame magician boy from earlier who's dumbfounded while looking surprised. Arisa-sensei is strict, so if you don't listen to her and can't explain later, it'll be hell ya know?

Mia wrote the explanation on the blackboard since it seemed easy to understand, and I lost my chance to show off my OP-ness as a student.
After the class, I ended up talking with the researchers about spells explanation and idea for new ones, I couldn't get better acquainted with the glasses-shota boy.

I'm happy that I could eat all I wanted in the luxurious cafeteria for teachers and upperclassman, but it wasn't enough to tingle the tongue of me who had gotten used to Master's and Lulu's transcendental ultimate cooking.

◇

"Books of advanced magic you say?"
"Nn."

The morning class is over, so we're asking the principal if we could browse the academy's magic books.
Of course, it's Mia who's asking.

"Normally, I can't give permission for students to read the books, but if it's none other than Misanalia-sama's request then--"
"Thanks."

It seemed like it'd be long, so I winked to Mia, and forcefully ended the talk.

The principal guides us to the door in the back of the library.
According to the principal, this door is protected by complicated barrier, so it won't open unless one uses the magic tool she has for unlocking it.

"■■ Open Lock"

Once the sturdy metal door is opened, the musty smell of old books tickle my nose.
The mucus on my nose is thin ever since I was born in this body, so I quickly use a handkerchief to protect my nose.

Mia cutely sneezes, "kushun", behind me, so I take some tissue and a mask from my Magic Bag and give it to her.

"Here, Mia."
"Thank you."

Inside the room, around 30 bookshelves are lined up with no windows.
And, there are already some visitors on the reading desk.

"Principal-sama--"

There are a princess-like woman with two maid-like girls.

Wonder if she's a noble daughter from somewhere?
--As the result of my appraisal, I understand that she's a real princess.

The sixth princess of Shiga Kingdom, Sistina-san. Her level is 17, her title is [Master of Forbidden Library], her skills are [Etiquette], [Arithmetic], [Alchemy], and [Force Magic].
Her two attendants' levels are at upper 30s, it seems they work as bodyguards and maids.

The principal greets the princess and then introduces Mia and me to her.

"I see, so you are--"

The princess looks at us like she finds it interesting.

"I've been thinking of having a chat with Chevalier Tachibana if possible."
"I feel honored."

I thought that she would say Mia, I wonder why is it me?
Judging from her gestures, I can't think that it was just a lip service at all.

"I'm sorry beforehand, is Chevalier Tachibana's age as her appearance suggest?"

--D-don't tell me, she saw through my X0-year old age from my previous life?!

"....Y-yes. I don't understand the meaning of her highness's question, but it has been 12 years since I was born in the middle of a group of small kingdoms."

I'm saying it in a roundabout way as a precaution if the princess or her attendants hold magic tools that can see through lies.

"Is that so--then, you guys really reach that elevated place in just few years...."

Probably someone who had appraisal skill checked our levels and ages during the new year [Audience Ceremony]. It should have been fine since our cheat Master had prepared mis-recognition item he made himself that couldn't be seen through with just passable things.

"Her highness, she is not someone who's been artificially raised. She possesses both the appropriate power and conduct."
"Oh my, this is the first time principal has praised students to such extent."

It was subtle, but apparently the princess stated that we were artificially raised by power-leveling, and then the principal backed us.
The power-leveling part is the truth, but I'll not correct that.
Who would believe power-leveling done to level 50.

"Chevalier Tachibana, I apologize for my impoliteness. Would you forgive my discourtesy?"
"Yes, her highness. Please call me Arisa if you would."

Putting aside Pink-san and Noja-hime, I never would've thought that a princess of a large kingdom frankly apologized like this. 'Pirorirorin', the sound effect of 'Favorable Impression UP' is resounding in my mind, I smile at the princess.

We would have had a friendly chat with the flow of event, but Mia muttered, "Back", and we were able to get back to our original goal.
Mia reads the advanced water magic book, while I read the fire one.

After skimming through it, I write a rough summary in my notebook.
Accidentally, I heard the conversation of the principal and the princess when I lifted my head.

"--That is classified as a fruit water, water that's been dripped with drops of fruit juice. It is possible to cleanse the fruit juice from the water with holy magic or water magic, but there is no magic that can separate them."
"Is that so...."

It sounds quite useful for experiments, does that not exist?

I think we can separate them by making use of the difference between the ionization tendency and osmosis rate.
Those concepts may not exist here, but useful magic should be made even without knowing the concept.

My eyes met with the princess's while I was thinking so.

"Arisa, do you know any spell that can be used for it?"
"No--"

Hearing my word of denial, the eyes of the princess that are full of expectation cloud over.

"--However, by making use of [Pure Water]'s code that detects the [Impurity in the Water], how about making a new magic that doesn't cleanse but separate?"

The separation part seems annoying, but our Master should be able to compose one in a night.

"New magic?"
"Yes, if it doesn't exist, then you can just make one."

I nod while feeling slightly proud toward the princess who looks surprised.
However, the principal pour cold water with her realistic view.

"Please wait. You will need 1000 gold coins as the expense if you want to research and develop a new spell. Her highness who is able to browse the documents in the forbidden library might be able to make it a bit cheaper but--"
"That much...."

The princess is surprised to hear the amount of money cited by the principal.

I meet eyes with Mia, and try to remember the number of spells that Master has made so far.
I think there are more than 100 in total including the worthless and useful ones.

....Well, it's our cheat Master, so I guess it's alright.

As expected, even a princess of a large kingdom can't easily move that much money freely.
Even if you seek funding from nobles and merchants, investors won't come for a magic with limited usability with no hope of recovery, the principal added.

"However, it's wonderful how you can have the idea of making a new spell."
"That is because Dame Tachibana is an expert of magic equal to Misanalia-sama."

The principal replies the princess's praise.
For some reason, it feels like she's praising Mia more than me, but I don't really mind.

Afterward, Mia joined and we talked about magic theory and writings as the topic until the sun went down.

The princess might have become a close friend if our social positions weren't different. During the heat of talk, the princess even invited us to her laboratory with it being a tea party as a pretext.

◇

The princess asks this when we are about to breakup.

"That reminds me, I saw Viscount Pendragon instructing the duchy capital nobles for the [Fireworks] magic that decorated the sky during the New Year Festival day, was that perhaps made by Arisa?"
"No, that magic was created by our master, Viscount Satou Pendragon."

I clear up the princess's misunderstanding immediately.

Our Master avoids looking conspicuous to the point of being strange, but there should be no problem affirming something that's been found out anyway.
He was really happy with custom scrolls, and brought new magic one after another to the viscount's workshop after all.

"--Is that true?"
"Nn."

Mia nods to the princess who looks like she couldn't believe it, and then she says, "Genius."

"Then I will invite Viscount Pendragon for the next tea party. I want to talk at least once with the person who has the playfulness to pursue that beautiful magic."

--I've done goofed.

I curse at my own stupidity when I see the sparkling face of the princess who looks like a maiden in love.
To think that I helped raising flag with my own hands!

Beside me, Mia who feels the foreboding of the appearance of a new rival frowns.
The only saving grace is the fact that there's zero chance our Master would fall in love with the princess with all the risk of getting involved in power struggle.

Haah, I wonder if he would hurry up and give up on Aze-san which has no hope of succeeding, and put his hands on me and Lulu~
Well, that won't happen huh....

Aah! I want to quickly have the body of an adult that can bewitch Master!

●Character Profiles

【Pink-san】 Menea, the third princess of a small kingdom, Rumooku. A pink-haired beautiful girl. 17 years old.
【Noja-Hime】Mitia, the princess of a small kingdom on the middle of the continent. Speaks with Noja. 15 year old. Yearn to become the hero's attendant.
【Rumooku Kingdom】 Once partnered with weaselkin to summon otherworld people.
【Sistina】The sixth princess of Shiga Kingdom. 18 year old. She's allowed to go in and out of the forbidden library in the royal castle.

13-7. Scattering Bait

Satou's here. Talking about scattering bait, I recall the time when I went fishing with sabiki rig on breakwaters during my childhood. I remember getting slightly frightened by the fish that reacted furiously to the scattering krill bait.

◇

"Sir Pendragon, is this the item that you want to exhibit on the auction the day after tomorrow?"
"The reception period for that one is already over, so I'm thinking of displaying this for the auction next month."

The older generation viscounts from the royal capital are looking at the jewel I've put in front of me with sparkling eyes.

I've come to the social salon after the kingdom conference is over, showing off a jewel made from Blood Bead there.
Of course it's not for boasting or satisfying my vanity, but to lure out the thieves who have been making havoc in the royal castle during the lunch break.

This Blood Bead was one of the item the True Ancestor Ban got from the floormaster, it's mainly used as an ingredient for healing and stamina recovery magic potions.
It seems it's rarely ever used for making disposable magic potion like I'm doing.

It's a lesser version of Blood Sphere that I also received together with it, but this Blood Bead itself is quite a rare material, it can only be gotten as a rare drop of the Blood Stalker monsters that infest the Bloodsucking Labyrinth in Saga Empire.

I saw with my own eyes when Ban and his vampire princesses easily made the thing though, so I don't feel like it's something that valuable.

"I thought this was a Ruby, but this is a Blood Bead right."
"That can't be--The Blood Bead that Bishtal Dukedom has looks more reddish brown doesn't it?"
"I heard that the brighter the red color of a Blood Bead is, the higher quality it is."
"With a Blood Bead this clear, just how valuable is it..."

At the very least, it's valuable enough to dazzle upper ranked nobles of a large kingdom who are used to luxurious items.
...It might have been better if I brought something more moderate, like a fist-sized ruby or emerald or something.

The reaction was bigger than I thought, so this is probably going to make a bigger rumor than planned.
It was a bit conspicuous, but it's nothing compared to when I exterminated a [Floormaster],

and when I became a viscount.

◇

Now then, I'll leave it to the nobles and the maids who were there to work spreading the rumor, while I'm preparing the site for the jewel.
Even now, I haven't made the trap for thieves that I was thinking of making when we first came to the royal capital.

I should make the thief trap when I'm checking the place for tonight power-leveling in the labyrinth.
First, I write some simple plan on the memo pad.
I have made one in the labyrinth city mansion, so let's improve that and make a version 2.

Next the preparation for the material.
I'll cut the exceedingly hard wall of the labyrinth with a holy sword, and use it as the building material.
I've stocked up a lot of liquid from tree-type monsters that have powerful adhesion, so there's no problem on that part.

In just 30 minutes, I made a seven-meter tall cube structure as the thief trap.
I've put three-dimensional maze-shaped passages together, and various non-lethal traps inside it.
The passages is too narrow to stand inside, you can barely able to crawl in it, I've also prepared dead-ends here and there.

It's probably going to take around one hour to reach the treasure room if you move in it normally.
Thieves that can employ or summon small creatures can probably invade the treasure room easily, but I can just prepare treasures that can only be moved when you have at least certain amount of strength.

Next I just have to bury this in the garden of my mansion in the royal capital.

◇

I return to the royal castle with teleportation and get back to my mansion with a carriage from there.
It seems I took too much time in the labyrinth, Zena-san's marker who was in my mansion before I had gone to the labyrinth is now in Earl Seryuu's mansion.

After changing my clothes, I ask Arisa about Zena-san while relaxing in the living room.

"Has Zena-san gone back already?"
"Yup, there was a messenger from the Earl calling her back."

Hm~m, did some emergency happen?
I should ask Echigoya Firm if there's any information later.

Pochi and Tama who are playing in the garden show their faces on the window of the living room.

"Prey~?"
"Master, we caught a suspicious person nodesu."

Apparently, the rumor has shown its effect already.
I go to the garden through the back door, and inspect the thief the two have caught.

According to AR reading, he's a member of [Long-armed Ape].
He's probably a remnant of the thieves who attacked us when we first arrived in the royal capital.

Looking at the map, I see a luminous point moving from this mansion toward the downtown.
I put a marker on it for now, I'll arrest it after the meal.

"Now then, suspicious person-kun. Why don't we have you talk on whose order you intruded here?"
"H-hmph. You think this great me will talk?"
"Of course you will--"

I use sound isolation magic and cover ourselves with earth wall magic and then begin the questioning.

"--Do it."
"Prepared~?"
"Suffering of hell is waiting nodesu."

With my instruction, Tama and Pochi begin the torture.
Inside the soundproof space, laughter of the suspicious person is echoing.

In order to help Tama and Pochi who are tickling the man happily, I use [Air Control] magic to restraint the air flow. Now the number of time he's suffocating should go up.

The suspicious person gave up after an hour.
Looks like he's more tight-lipped than I thought.

"--We were ordered by the boss to steal the orbs that were carried by the airship rode by Duke Bishtal y'se. I heard that orb-like things were in this Viscount's mansion--"

The suspicious person talks while grasping for breath.
Fumu, so they were aiming for the orbs when they attacked us during our travel to the royal capital....

The people that we captured earlier seems to be the execution unit's leader.
I search these guys' boss on the map.

....not applicable?

"What's the name of your boss?"
"Ro-Ropo."

I searched that name this time, but I couldn't find it.

"Looks like the torture wasn't enough."

I instruct Pochi to break a cheap bronze sword with her fingers.
The suspicious person insists on his innocence when he saw that.

"W-wait! I'm not telling a lie!"

His expression looks real, but I shouldn't take the words of a thief seriously.
I instruct Tama and Pochi to resume the torture.

『Master, Lulu said that the preparation for the crab nabe has been finished.』
"Okay, I'm going back now."

Sound couldn't reach here, so Arisa contacted me with space magic.

The nabe is more important than torturing the thief.
I tie the thief with a rope and leave him unattended on the earth wall. Even if he gets out of the rope, I can just capture him again when I raid the thief's hideout.

"Now then, you two let's have a dinner."
"Aye!"
"Yes nanodesu!"

I take the two along back to the mansion.

◇

I'm listening to everyone's activities in the royal academy during the dinner.

"Geez, you see, Mia has become a teacher instead of a student. I was surprised you know."
"Nn, sur-prise."

Mia shows a peace sign toward Arisa while smiling triumphantly.
There's no problem since I was planning to let her work as a teacher in-training in the first place.

"Underling~?"
"That's right nanodesu. Master, please listen to Pochi's story nodesu."

Pochi who was urged by Tama tells about the event in the knight school.
Apparently, the two have gotten some underlings.

And then, Arisa cut in trying to say something after she's finished a bowl of crab rice porridge.

"You see--"

Arisa is hesitating.

"Did you do something bad?"
"Will you get angry?"
"It depends on the content. Quickly say it."
"Uu, it's not something that bad you know..."

Then why are you hesitating.

"I became a friend with the princess ."
"With Princess Menea?"

If you're talking about a princess who's attending the royal academy, I know only Princess Menea.
Arisa shakes her head.

"Not that one. Her highness Sistina."

--Highness again huh.[1]

However, I feel like I've heard the name Sistina before.
....That's right, the curt princess of the forbidden library should have that name.

Apparently, Arisa became friend with her with magic talk as the impetus.

"Then you see, we were invited to a tea party by the princess."
"Eh~, isn't that great. Together with Mia?"
"Nn."

Mia nods.
Arisa mutters sheepishly, "Master too."

"Don't tell me, I was invited to the tea party by the princess too?"
"Y-Yup."

I see, no wonder she hesitated to say it.

Princess Sistina is free now ever since she canceled her engagement with Earl Lesseu.
If I come to her tea party, the surrounding will misunderstand as me trying to be her spouse.

There's no way that Arisa doesn't understand such a thing, she must be quite fond of the princess.
I don't mind getting some rumor for this.

"You don't have to look like that. I'll go to the princess's tea party."
"....Is it alright?"
"Yeah, it's not like I have an ulterior motive anyway, there's no problem if I regard it as an extension of the tea party organized by the noble wives."

Moreover, Princess Sistina was robbed the status of a territory lord's wife due to a mid-level demon devastating Lesseu Earldom, so the chance of her being the [Highness] is probably low.

--It's a different story if Lesseu Earldom was partially destroyed because she wanted to cancel the engagement though.

◇

After the dinner, and setting the thief trap in the garden, I raided the hideout of the criminal guild [Long-armed Ape] as Kuro, and succeeded arresting all the members.
I had stationed Arisa and Tama on top of the nearby water towers in case they escaped, but it ends up being needless.

A mysterious presence suddenly appears when I've just completed the arrest.

"--Aiming for my limbs like this, you daredevil."

I jump aside to evade the flying blade that appears together with a glint of silver light.
Before I knew it, a man in green attire, holding two curved swords, has appeared there.

According to AR reading, his name is [Ropo], level 66.

--Strange. He didn't exist when I searched awhile ago.

While warding off the twin curved swords' attacks, I put a marker on him.
His swordsmanship is relatively good, but he's not an enemy of me who has [Foresight: Anti-personnel Combat] skill.

"I see, it seems you're quite skilled--"

The man who mutters like he has some leeway tries to strike me again continuously.
This time I evade the attack without blocking it, and cut his green mask before he can pull back his swords.

The face looks familiar.
It's the same face as Propor the [Mirage], the executive of [Light of Liberty] who succeeded summoning parts of Demon God.
Propor and Roppo, their names are similar too. They might be relatives.

Now then, let's stop playing with the swords now and neutralize him with a palm strike like usual.

--Suddenly, the guy acted strangely.

He thrusts his own sword toward his own chest.
The blood gushing from the wound spray toward me.

--My Crisis Perception reacts for some reason.

I jump back to evade getting bathed in the blood.
White smoke raise from the floor that's hit by the blood as if hit by strong acid.

The man is gone.
In the instant the white smoke appeared when I didn't check him, he had escaped to the other room.

The members of [Long-armed Ape] who are in the other room have all been killed.
It's probably to prevent them from talking. He sure is quick to cut them off even though he said they were his limbs or something.

I open the map in the room that smells of iron.

--it's not there?

The marker that shows him is not reflected on the map.

Perhaps he used shadow magic?
I think that as a possibility and then check the marker column of the map.

--Impossible.

The name 'Ropo' isn't written there too.
Marked people are written on the marker column even if they are inside shadow magic or barriers made by Yuika's Unique Skill....

He might have a type of Unique Skill that I don't know.

He's either a hero, a demon, or a demon lord....
At the very least, it's probably okay to consider him related to the real [Highness].

I collected all the things besides the corpses in the hideout and then returned home.
I pray that there are things that contain information about [Highness] among them.

1. A good time to tell you that the word [殿下] (Denka) for [His/Her Highness] is gender neutral in Japanese.

13-8. Princess of the Forbidden Library

Satou's here. Thinking about something alone tends to get you stuck on an impasse. When that happens, taking a bit of break to cool down and consulting with other people should get you to find a simple solution to the problem.

◇

...Spreading rumor about the jewel might have been a mistake.

I think about the Ropo thing earlier while looking at the stars from the roof of my mansion.

I couldn't sense his presence until right before he spoke.
I've lost sight of his existence despite having put a marker on him.
His level is equal to greater demons'.

He probably has concealment-type Unique Skill that's powerful enough to elude another Unique Skill.

I also thought the possibility of him teleporting away chantlessly, but it's impossible to hide from the marker column no matter how far you go.
Maybe dimensional transfer or locked space--but even in the case with Yuika back then, it won't let you hide from marker column.

Considering that, the highest possibility is that he has concealment-type unique skill after all.
Thinking from that, I can guess his identity to a certain extent.

Hero, reincarnated person, demon lord.... perhaps, god or their apostle, I'm certain.

Still, if he has the perfect hiding skill, I wonder why did he leave it to his underlings to steal?
The success rate should be higher if he stole it himself.

Maybe there's some kind of reason?

If I just confirm the AR reading from that time--

My stomach suddenly feels warm, so I throw my view down.

"Wlcome~?"

Tama is curling into a ball on my stomach.

"What's wrong? Did you make a mistake?"

This time Arisa appeared by teleporting, and then silently put the head of me who was watching the stars on her lap.

"--A bit yeah."
"Isn't alright to fail once in a while. You're human after all."

Arisa comforts me sounding like a big sister while patting my hair.
How pathetic of me as their guardian to make them worry like this.

I should stop regretting and reflecting now.

--From now on I won't get my priority wrong.

"You're right."

I stand up while replying Arisa.

Now then, time to act--

◇

I went to the forbidden library in order to seek information.
Of course, as Nanashi that is.

"Hmhmm, hmm, hmmhmmhmm."

--I saw something unusual.
That taciturn princess is humming.

"--Ah"

The princess who notices me has her face reddened and then she shuts her mouth.

"You look happy. Did anything good happen?"
"Yes, a bit."
"Really. That's good."

Apparently, the princess is happy that she gets along with Arisa and Mia.
Getting along is lovely, so they said.

I got to see the happy face of a beauty, so let's get back to my original objective now.
I go to the six-armed golem and ask it to search for some books.

"--Here are the catalogs of forbidden water, fire, and space magic, and unique skills that you wish."

I take the books that have been piled up on top of the desk by the living dolls into my storage, and search keywords such as, "Concealment", "Cognizance Inhibition", "Hiding" through Menu.

The majority of the hit are people who were good at Concealment and Hiding, I've found many famous people of the past like the thief hero, or the assassin king who had those kinds

of unique skills, not only demon lords.
However, every one of those skills is just a skill that has the effect of annulling search-type skill, not that it could oppose search-type unique skills.

--I guess that's to be expected, the sample size is too few in the first place.

There are also a lot of other useful-looking information, so I transcribe these forbidden books into the forbidden book folder of the memo pad.

From the forbidden spell catalog, I ask the librarian for the magic books that have the spells of [Complete Control over Blood] for Mia's use, and [Dimension Shredder] and [Ash Flare] for Arisa's use.

"Please pardon me. The books besides the space magic one are currently being borrowed for reading."

--Reading?

Thus when I turn toward the princess who has resumed to hum again, I see that there are indeed the books that I asked the librarion for.
Looks like she's not reading it now, let's borrow it for a bit.

"Princess, can I have your time for a bit?"
"W-what can I help you with?"

The princess looks shaken, perhaps she never thought that I would call her.

"Can I borrow that book for a moment?"
"Eh, this book?"
"Yup, I'll return it to you immediately."

Since the princess nodded, I put the book into my storage and transcribed not only the spells I wanted, but the entire book.
The princess seemed surprised about something when I was putting the book into my Storage.

"Thank you. Next, please lend me that book."
"Y-yes..."

After processing the second book like the first, I return the book to the princess.

--By any chance, I wonder if the princess is researching the spells for Arisa's and Mia's sake?

"....Um, Hero-sama."
"What is it?"

After thanking her and preparing to leave, the princess unusually talked to me.

"Is a demon lord going to attack the Royal Capital again?"

"There's no oracle about it, so the Royal Capital should be safe right?"

I replied the princess who looks anxious, but I did not speak, "Some greater demon might be acting behind the scene though", out loud.

Still, oracle huh.

I heard in the duchy capital that there would be seven advents of demon lords.
I had heard it after defeating the wild-boar king in the duchy capital underground, so I though the remaining six were mistaken, but since I met the dog-head in the labyrinth city, it's possible that demon lords might appear in the remaining five places.

In fact, Hero Hayato is currently pursuing a demon lord in the weaselkin empire.

After getting the [Chant Orb] at the auction and I become able to teleport to any places with space magic, I'm thinking of checking the places in turns.

Come to to think of it, where were the remaining places of the oracles?

If I remember right, Sera's oracle points to another continent, the others are on the Holy Kingdom Parion on the western part of this continent, Weaselkin Empire on the eastern part of the continent, and the Ratkin Principality on the northeast part of the continent--If I'm not mistaken, that one should be close to the [Maze of Trazayuya] where Zen was hiding.
The last one is the Kingdom of Yowok that has occupied Arisa's kingdom.

Yowok Kingdom.... I feel like I've heard something about it from a rumor.
It should be on the neighborhood of Bishtal Dukedom that revolted. And also, the younger brother of Marquis Kelten who's under suspicion of doing coup d'etat should be the prince consort of Yowok Kingdom.

....Perhaps, demons are involved in those suspicious stories?

When I'm able to chant magic, I'll go to check Yowok Kingdom first thing first.

"....Then, why are you checking past heroes and demon lords?"
"Even though the Royal Capital is alright, they might appear in other places. And also--"

Using this opportunity, I talked about the peculiar hiding skill that Ropo used to the princess who's well-read.
The princess searches her memory while having a difficult face.

"A thief that can null Hero-sama's Enemy Search Unique Skill is it.... Perhaps he used some kind of artifact that could teleport or hid him in the boundary?"

Fumu, there's the possibility of him using some Artifact-class item too huh.

Opinions from other people really are important after all.
Getting a new view point like this is a hit, but for now, I tell her that it's not that kind of item.

"Even if he used such item, I would have still known where the opponent was."

However, it's also possible that he has combined concealment item and his own superior hiding skill.

"Then he might have been annihilated during that moment."
"Annihilated?"
"Yes, one of the greater demon that Ancient King-sama fought should have that kind of ability. "

Looks like I've overlooked it since I searched only with 'Unique Skill' as the keywords.
....Or rather, isn't it bad for him if he was annihilated?

"What kind of ability is it?"
"It wasn't passed down in detail, but it seems there was a greater demon that could appear before Ancient King-sama in an ever-changing form like as a human, a demi-human, or an animal, befuddling him--"

The princess picked out that from the bottom of her memory to tell me.

"--the ability that can create such things is called『Mock Body Creation (Create Avatar)』."

◇

After hearing more details from the princess, I hunted for information regarding [Mock Body Creation] ability from the forbidden library.

It seems to be a skill that creates a mock body which has the same skill as the user and then the user possesses it.
Looks like it's different than the body clone the sakuramochi demon from before was using.

It seems the main body is defenseless during the creation of the mock body if left as is, but fighting using it with no penalty is such a big advantage.
It's not an exaggeration to call it unfair.

It's written in the book that the demon was defeated by the breath of the heavenly dragon that was together with Ancient King at that time, but the state of the affair is written vaguely.

I guess I'll go ask the person concerned herself.

◇

I tell the members of Echigoya Firm that the special training will be on break today, and for them to strive to better themselves their own.

In addition, half of the executives whom I had sent to gather materials in various branch offices absurdly replied that they had finished their missions.

They are this capable yet they couldn't succeed as explorers and were caught by the lost thieves....

I told the girls that I would pick them up tomorrow evening, and for them to just kick back and relax on some high class inns.

Now then, before I go to Fujisan Mountains to gather intelligence, I'll have to ensure the safety of our girls.

If there's a possibility of a greater demon, I'm afraid of them getting surprise attacks during their sleep.
In order to have relieving sleep, sleeping in the tree house of Boruenan Forest should be good.
This place is the safest place besides being near me.

"Good evening, Lua-san."
"Welcome back, Satou-san. We've prepared the bedding."
"Thank you very much. I'm sorry for asking a big favor so suddenly."
"No, this is nothing much."

Aze-san who's quick to go to bed at night is fast asleep already, so it's only Lua-san here.
Pochi and Tama are already sleeping, so Liza carry them to the bed under her armpits. Shiro and Crow are sleeping happily on Nana's chest.

"Then, I'll be going to Fujisan Mountains."
"Understood. Take care okay."

Sent off by Arisa and the others, I leave Boruenan.

It might be nice to rest in Boruenan Forest for a while after the auction.
We've been working too much lately haven't we.

In addition, as the guards of the thief trap, I've left mass produced bronze golems, scarecrows for surveillance, and small gargoyles for pursuing.

◇

On a straight line, the nearest place to Fujisan mountains is Muno City.
In Nanashi form, I teleported to the wall of Muno City with Unit Arrangement, and flew with Flash Drive to the border of the territory on the direction of Fujisan Mountains.

I'd like to have a base for teleporting in on the border of the territory, so I search for some handy ruin using Map.

"Fumu, an abandoned fort used by thieves as their stronghold huh--"

There's no one who hears my muttering.
Looks like the restoration of public order doesn't reach far out here.

Spending too much time on it would be annoying, so I used [Spray Gun] used for the executives' power-leveling to neutralize the thieves, captured and tied them skillfully with [Magic Hands].

[Unit Arrangement] only covers Friend Units, but it seems that neutralized people like this can be moved together with the unit as captives.
I push the captured thieves to the territorial army and then I go back to the abandoned fort earlier with Unit Arrangement.

--Yup, this is convenient.

Next time, it might be interesting to tame some griffons that thieves avoid and let them nest on the fort.

I dance through the sky while thinking such things, heading toward the sacred Fujisan Mountains where snow remain.

◇

I use the [All Map Exploration] after a long time not using it once I enter Fujisan Mountains.
It seems Tenryu (Heavenly Dragon) and Mito are in the shrine on the mountaintop. Mito is the only human here, the other living beings are only dragons, monsters and beasts.
The monsters are located only on the foot of the mountains, there are dragons from the middle to the top.
Looks like there are more than a hundred lesser dragons, seven adult dragons, and one elder dragon.

I thought of hiding my presence, but it'd be bad they thought of me as someone who was plotting of doing something bad to Mito and Tenryu, so I go toward the shrine boldly openly.

--As the result, looks like it's a failure.

The dragons are coming to me, simply because they can't forgive someone who enters their turf.

Lesser dragons that are smaller than their counterparts in the lower layer of the labyrinth soar in the sky one after another.
Adult dragons and the elder dragon have come from the shrine.

"GURORORORWWWWN", so the vigorous roars of the dragons shake the mountains.

I don't want to hurt the dragons who have become a rare species because of me.
I'll make use of titles and make them become obedient. I put the title [Friend of the Black Dragon].

"KISSYWAAAAAAA"
"BWAOOOOOOWWWWN"
"GURORORORWWWWN"

Their roars become even more intense than before.

I rudely thought that the black dragon Heiron was hated, but I feel the excitement of, "True friends exchange blows with each other", from their eyes.

--I forgot that the dragons are fundamentally battle junkies.

I don't mind keeping them company if there's only a few, but I'm worried that I'd fail at holding back when there are these many.
I change my title to [Natural Enemy of Dragons], and fly past them with Flash Drive while the dragons are flinching.

It seems the dragons here have less guts than the evil dragons, the instant I changed my title, their bodies were stiffened out of fear and they fell one after another to the mountain slopes.

....I wonder if I made the wrong choice?

The mountain slopes become full of big holes, but since the health gauges of these dragons haven't been decreased in the least, they must be playing dead.

The adult dragons didn't fall down, but they glide through the sky while turning away not to meet my line of sight.
The tension in the air feels like they're thinking of something rude, like their life will be over if their flapping wings even attract my attention.

I felt slightly guilty about it, so I apologize in my heart when I pass them.
I'll treat them to some whole roasted goats in a banquet later....

While thinking such a thing, I moved toward the shrine with Flash Drive.

Tenryu (Heavenly Dragon) appears from the shrine, spreads her wings and makes a threatening pose.
This one has a lot of debt from me, so being slightly rough should be fine.

『GRORORORORORWWWW--』

I change my title to [Natural Enemy of Heavenly Dragons] and take the wind out of her sails.

『--KYUUWNNN』

....Are you a puppy?

◇

Tenryu turned tail and disappeared into the back of the shrine.
I know wherever she is from the luminous point in the map though, so there's no problem.

I calmly land on the shrine floor.

The inside is warm as if the cold outside is a lie.
It's probably under air conditioner magic.

While advancing the uninhabited corridor, the points that indicate Mito and Ten-chan are reflected on the radar.
Beyond the long corridor, the two appear in greece toga-like clothing.

"Are you the bad kid who's bullying the dragons--"

Mito who's holding a broom while taking an imposing stance looks quite gallant.
Now then, I should clear up the misunderstanding before we talk.

13-9. Fujisan Mountains Shrine

Satou's here. I heard that when you have a childhood friend of the opposite sex, there's a high probability that the two of you will become lovers. Each time, I insisted that childhood's friends lovers only exist in the world of fictions.

◇

"--Huh? Aren't you the violet-haired hero from the other day?"
"Hi, it's been a while."

Looks like she remembers about Nanashi.
She's calmer than I thought--.

"Is this the guy who tortured Ten-chan?"
"That's right Mito. To me who couldn't move, he scoped my body, peeled off my scales, and cut my tail and horns! And then to the inverse scale..."

Ten-chan who follows behind Mito to hide herself complains while shaking.
Looks like the inside is Tenryu.

When her eyes meet mine, she hides behind as if she's a bullied child.

--How pathetic of a heavenly dragon.

For now I should tell the truth to Mito since being silent would make things worse.

"Please don't say it like that. That was a treatment. I swear that it was not an act out of sadism."
"....Really?"
"Yeah of course. I did heal the cut tail and scales with high magic potion and healing magic right."

Mito looks back and confirms Ten-chan, "Ten-chan, is it true?"
To hear both opinions like this, it's very like Mito.

"That's true but.... This guy even tore off my inverse scale y'see? That one hurt even if he healed me."
"There was no helping it right. Your inverse scale was encroached too. Isn't it better than getting your body taken by the Demon God?"

Although her tone is still resentful, Ten-chan gradually loses her force.

"In other words, you helped Ten-chan didn't you?"
"Yeah, it would have been better if there was a less rough way to do it, but I did not stock anesthetic powerful enough for a heavenly dragon."

Anesthestic that works for heavenly dragon-class would make ordinary men die of heart attack after all.

"Ten-chan, say thank you and sorry to this person would you?"
"....Mito."

Scolded by Mito, the transcendental beauty looks like she's a kid.

"'m sorry....thanks....."

After muttering just that much, she ran away toward the back of the shrine.
I thought that, for a little bit, only for a little bit, she looked cute.

That must have been just my imagination.

◇

Now then, let's get back to the main topic.

"Mito, I have a business with you, not Tenryu."
"Me? Don't tell me you fell for me~?"

Mito smiles happily.
And then she rattles on while gesturing dramatically.

"But, you can't! You can't I said, you can't! Because I have Senpai who has promised to take me in the future!"

....She's not talking about me right?
I don't remember making such promise.

"Don't worry, I don't feel that way. Rather, is there any place we can talk calmly?"

Talking while standing on the corridor is that.

"Then let's go to my room. Even though it's called a room, it's a building big enough for the whole parliament to enter."

Mito leads me to a luxurious building that even puts the royal capital's state guest residence to shame. It's made of light green-colored stones that look like marbles.
I'm taken to the living room of that mansion that's close to the entrance.

When we sit down, the living statue maids-san serve us some warm tea.
Their dexterity rival Lulu's even though they're just stone statues.

"Now then, since we've caught our breath, let's get back to the topic at hand."
"Good idea."

I take off the violet-colored wig and place it on the sofa.

"Arara, so it was a wig? Black hair, that means you're the current era's hero--"

I take off the white mask while Mito is speaking.

"--Eh, that beautiful girl's face!"

Mito shouts out when she sees the face of Nanashi that looks exactly like hers.
....Who the heck is a beauty.

"So you were a woman? By any chance, are you me from a parallel world?"
"I'm a genuine man. This is just a disguise."

I stop talking and tear off the Face Mask from the chin.
I sure feel like a phantom thief.

"--I-Ichirou-niii!!!"

I gently receive the hug, with the force of a level 89, of Mito--A junior at my workplace who's also my childhood friend, Kouhai Mitsuko.
I erase the inertia by making use of Unit Arrangement.

"Ichirou-nii, Ichirou-nii, Ichirou-nii, Ichirou-nii--"

I hug her delicate body along with the torrent of emotion that seem to be loaded in my names.

I gently pat Mitsuko's hair like when she was crying as a child, and let her weep to her heart's content until she calms down.
It's only been a year ago for me, but it should have been quite a long time for her.

After crying for about a hour, she's finally stopped, so I try talking to her.

"It's been a while. So you really were summoned as a hero during the development of FFW?"
"Un--Ah, so the bug-ridden FFW have been finished by Ichirou-nii, I mean, Suzuki-senpai?"
"Yeah, I had at least delivered the production-ready package to Mr. Overweight before I came here, so it should be fine."
"That's good. It was always weighting on my mind."

On top of being quite responsible herself, it's her first project after all.

"Oh right, you can keep calling me Ichirou. We're not in the workplace."
"Un, then please call me Hikaru with love."

Hikaru is an important childhood friend for me, but I don't feel love toward her.

"I'll do it if it's just affection."
"You're being cold like that hasn't changed eh."

Hikaru said so and smiled nostalgically.

By the way, Hikaru is Mitsuko's nickname.
She proclaimed that the name Mitsuko wasn't stylish, so she put up the name herself.

"Putting aside the love thing, is it alright to call you with Hikaru instead of Mitsuko now that you're at age?"
"Don't call it at age! I kept being called Shiga Yamato or Mito ever since I came here, so I want you to call me my name when I was in Japan. Calling me Junior-shi is alright too but.... Hikaru is nicer."

She was called [Junior-shi] by Mr. Overweight when she was admitted, and the name spread. "Kouhai is a kouhai (junior) so your name from now on is『Junior-shi』", so he said and the surrounding people accepted it, the next day, even sales people started to call Hikaru that.
As a retribution, he got the nickname [Mr. Overweight], so both were just as bad.

"Then I'll call you Hikaru."
"Un--"

Some kind of itchy feeling flow between us, but Hikaru tends to self-destruct like Arisa so this kind of mood won't stay long.

"--Wait, why are you so young!"

You're minding that now.

◇

I talked about everything that has happened ever since I got to this world without hiding anything.

This is a good opportunity, I'm also going to tell Arisa and Liza about my real name and the matter of god-slaying once I return to the mansion.
I'll decide what to do with the other girls after consulting with the two.

"So you weren't summoned as a hero?"
"Yeah, according to the current hero there's a high possibility that I was summoned as a normal person by the reincarnated person from Rumooku Kingdom."
"Hm~m, Rumooku Kingdom huh. The pink-haired young king of that kingdom looks similar to Shiga-kun from Teni x Brave~"

Teni x Brave is a puzzling shoujo manga about tennis battles between a blue-haired demon king and a pink-haired hero that Hikaru really got into when she was in Japan.
If I'm not mistaken, the main character was--

"Hikaru. By any chance, did you get the name Shiga Yamato from the main characters of Teni x Brave?"

"Hehe~~, it was the name I always use in games, so it came out on the spur of the moment."

I can't fault her since I also used the name I always use in games too, [Satou] that is.
After talking about my end of things, I listen to various stories of Hikaru after she was summoned as a hero.

"I was bestowed divine power fragment by God Parion in a white room. I didn't want to kill so I chose the『Friendship』skill for befriending demon lords, and just that one filled the vessel of my soul fully."

Certainly, there's a skill called [Friendship] on Hikaru's skill column.
I didn't think that it was a Unique Skill.

"And then after the summoning, I was treated as a failed hero and got my holy sword and holy tools confiscated, and made to be in charge of transporting things with my infinite-capacity Inventory."

Apparently, there were three other heroes besides Hikaru in Saga Empire at the time.

"And then the airship that carried me was shot down by the demon lord's surprise attack, and I became a prisoner of Orc Empire--It's alright, don't worry! My chastity is still there for Ichirou-nii to take."
"I'm not worried about that."

Of course I'm happy that Hikaru wasn't sexually assaulted.

The demon lord that Hikaru talked about was the [Golden Wild Boar King] that I fought in the duchy capital's underground.
Hikaru who had become a prisoner made friends with the orcs thanks to [Friendship] Unique Skill, and built a camaraderie with the demon lord, but the demon lord who was encroached by the god's fragment challenged the two major empires at that time--Furu Empire and Saga Empire, causing a great war, turning the situation upside down.

It was a dreadful war that had a large number of demon lords and multiple heroes fighting with each other.
All of those heroes besides Hikaru lost their lives in that battle, Furu Empire who boasted of being invincible fell into ruin, and the world was thrown in chaos, so Hikaru narrates.

Afterwards, Hikaru was released from being a prisoner, and then she became friend with Tenryu, bestowed holy arms including Claiomh Solais at the Dragon God's place, and accomplished the great deed of vanquishing the great demon lord.
Hikaru herself seem to regret defeating the demon lord and the orcs, she doesn't seem proud about it.

"Did you choose to remain here after subjugating the demon lord?"
"No way. I immediately chose to go home since I wanted to go to where Ichirou-nii was."

--Then, why is she here now?

"When I was returning to Japan, I got an oracle from our enshrined deity--I won't meet Ichirou-nii even if I get back to the former world, it said."

Hikaru stops talking there and then stares at my eyes.
Hikaru's family from her father's side work as Shinto priests of a shrine, and the enshrined deity is--

"Did you meet Ama-no-Mizuhana-Hime?"
"I didn't. Only the voice....no, that's not right, I got something like a lump of image before it become words."

She believed that image, and then she returned to the current Duchy Capital.
After that, Hikaru founded Shiga Kingdom with her followers and comrades.

The current capital of Shiga Kingdom was relocated after the second generation King took over, and she herself passed time by touring while reforming the world and excessively hunting youth restoration medicines in labyrinths.
And then she received another oracle, established a magical cold sleep facility in the tower at the sea of trees on the foot of Fujisan Mountains, and fell asleep there. It's just recently that she woke up it seems.

The violet wig accidentally enters my view.

--Right, I forgot to apologize to Hikaru.
I apologize for not clearing the misunderstanding of the king and the others about me being Yamato, and suggest one thing to her.

"If you want to see your descendants, wear this wig, you'll be treated as the reincarnated Ancient King Yamato and can get to meet them y'see."
"Didn't I say that I protected my chastity! The second generation king is my adopted child you see. He was an illegitimate child of the last Furu emperor, a good child who pressed on even in difficult situations. His favorite phrase was『To not shame the name of Shiga』--"

Come to think of it, the king had Shiga as his family name huh.

"--But, I see. It might be nice to meet the descendant of Sharlick-kun."

Hikaru quietly said those words.
The same name as the third prince--wait, it's the opposite. The third prince probably got his name from the second generation king.

I take out an unused violet wig and Nanashi set from Storage and give it to Hikaru.

◇

After talking about our girls, I get back to the reason why I came here.

"『Mock Body (Avatar)』?"

"Yeah, there was a record about it being used by a greater demon that was killed by Tenryu's breath."
"Then that's probably about the green greater demon. That one was like the different colored one among the rangers[1]."

According to Nanashi there were six senior greater demons with different colors that served under the Golden Wild Boar King, they were Red, Blue, Yellow, Green, and Black.
As for the greater demon itself, there are a lot of them that exist it seems.

"How did you deal with it?"
"I figured its characteristic after encountering it many times. It used『Zamasu』as its ending word. I could quickly distinguish if it was a mock body if we just talked for a bit."

.....Why didn't it just change the ending word.

The Ropo from back then talked normally, so it was not the same person huh.

"Then it's most likely a concealment type Unique Skill after all."
"Ichirou-nii's Unique Skill is enemy search type is it."
"Yeah, it's close to that. Once I marked someone, I know wherever they are even if they went to a different dimension."
"Hee, then does it know my current location?"

What is she saying when she's right in front of me.... Hikaru's luminous point disappears from the Radar.

Surprised, I open the map and check the marker column, Hikaru's marker denotes location unknown too.

"How about it?"

The moment Hikaru spoke, her marker reappeared on the Radar.

"The marker still existed, but the location became unknown."

Looks like she's satisfied with my answer, she nods proudly with crossed arms.

"As I thought. Ichirou-nii's search skill gets its information from the same resource as the analysis board that I made."
"Analysis board, you mean Yamato Stone?"
"Looks like it's called that now.... Rather than that, it's about the resource."

According to Hikaru's explanation, there's a stream of Magic Essence created by the Dragon God--the so-called Dragon Vein--and, the thing that's flowing in that stream is not just Magic Essence, but also various information.
The information from Appraisal and Market Price/Estimation skills also come from this Dragon Vein.

"In other words, if you can stop the information from flowing into that Dragon Vein, you can isolate the information."
"....I see."

Recognition Inhibition type items work by circulating false information to that stream.
I understand the principle, but then I can't catch Ropo like this--

"However, it's difficult to maintain complete isolation you know. Your own magic power will be getting depleted terribly fast while you're isolating yourself from the flow of Magic Essence, and during that time, you can't even recover your magic power from outside~"

Looking at Hikaru's MP gauge, it's been decreased by about 30%.
If it's decreased that much in just that short time, maintaining it in a long period of time should be difficult even if the user's level is relatively high.
I can understand why Ropo didn't do the stealing himself.

I imitate Hikaru and try to isolate myself from the flow of Magic Essence.

....It's not going well.
Is it different from cutting off my presence?

Just like when I use hiding skills, I assimilate myself with the surrounding and furthermore, I project the opposite side of my body on the Magic Essence like optical camouflage--

>[Recognition Inhibition] Skill Acquired
>[Magic Essence Concealment] Skill Acquired
>[Magic Essence Camouflage] Skill Acquired
>[Optical Camouflage] Skill Acquired
>TItle [One who Deludes All] Acquired

I got something slightly different too, but well, since it looks useful, there's no particular problem.
Now that I'm able to do it myself, I now understand the way to sniff out the camouflage.

"You're amazing Ichirou-nii. Is it a magic to make you disappear?"
"No, it seems to be an『Optical Camouflage』skill."
"It seems huh. You'd be a Jack all trades, Master of none if you waste your skill points you know?"

I tell Hikaru who's worried, "It's alright", and start to try getting the crucial skill.

I ask Hikaru to activate her camouflaging from Magic Essence skill.

Just like before, Hikaru's luminous point disappears from the Radar.
In order to increase my concentration, I cut OFF the menu indicators.

--Search for the oddness.

If there's none of it, then search for the blank space.

If there's no blank space, then search for the discrepancy.

As if looking at the dead point of my view, I stare hard at the thing that can't be seen....

....The fluctuation of information.

....The unnaturalness of the flow.

--I see it!

>[Oddness Detection] Skill Acquired
>[Magic Essence Distribution Perception] Skill Acquired
>[Anti Magic Essence Camouflage Detection] Skill Acquired
>Title [One who Sees Through All] Acquired

Alright!
Skills get.

Unfortunately, it seems the skills can't link well with the Map, but I can use them to detect within the Radar's range.

Now then, the preparation is complete.
I'll seize Ropo's tail when I get back to the Royal Capital!

1. Ranger as in Power Ranger. Sentai.

13-10. Arrest

Satou's here. Fun chases between detectives and thieves only happens in fiction. I think in reality, several policemen form a team to track down the criminal.

◇

I talked all night with Hikaru, and left the Heavenly Dragon Shrine as the sun rose.

The plan is for Hikaru to go to the Royal Capital after soothing Tenryu.

The shrine is treated as its own area, so I can't directly teleport to it through Unit Arrangement, I can do short-range teleport to it though.
I've put a carved seal board for Return Teleport in Hikaru's mansion, so we can meet anytime.

I wanted to reconcile with the dragons before going out of the shrine, but they were frightened more than I thought and didn't want to get close to the shrine, so I asked Hikaru for their mental care.

I'm thinking of bringing some presents for them another day.

I thought of going to Boruenan Forest but it was at the hour where only Lulu should have woken up, so I went to the Royal Capital first to eliminate the thieves.

I move to Pendragon Mansion with Unit Arrangement, quickly activate the Anti Magic Essence Camouflage skill, and then notice one thing as I open the menu.

--The opponent shouldn't be activating it permanently if it's a skill with bad fuel consumption.

So I thought and checked the map, turned out Ropo is existing normally in an area of the slump.
Looks like my expectation is right on mark.

I investigate the thief hideout where Ropo is on the map, and move to his room with Unit Arrangement.
Right before that, I changed into Kuro form like yesterday from Nanashi form.

Two half-naked women are sleeping on both sides of the bed.
They haven't noticed me yet. Probably because I'm using Magic Essence Camouflage skill and Hiding skill.

The two women seem to be thieves too, so I can apprehend them without reserve.

I slightly lift up Ropo who's still sleeping with [Magic Hand] and then tie him with a rope

made of [Thorn Foot]'s ivy.
Looks like he wakes up, he raises a hoarse scream.
Hearing that scream, the women ready daggers on their hands on top of the bed.

It's troublesome, so I neutralize the women with [Remote Stun].
I tumble the neutralized women off the bed, and then lightly cut Ropo's cheek with the dagger.
Unlike with yesterday, the spilling blood didn't become smoke, it only stained the bed red.

"Who the hell are yaaa"

--He's forgotten already even though we just met yesterday?

Without answering him, I strike his stomach with [Remote Stun] like with the women.
I had thought that he would resist, but Ropo's status quickly becomes 'Fainted'.

....Strange. It's too easy.

When I see Ropo with Anti Magic Essence Camouflage skill activated, I feel something odd on his neck.
According to AR reading it's a recognition inhibition type artifact called [Thief God Harness].

I couldn't take it off, so I store it into the Storage directly.

--Who is this guy?

The person I had thought was Ropo turned into someone else.
It's a level 30 middle-aged bearded man.

Apparently, he's a body double who disguised himself by using an artifact.
I round up the other thieves beside the fake Ropo and take them to the royal capital's soldiers.

◇

I return to the thief hideout and recover the fainted fake Ropo to question him.

"Now then, you'll be telling me your relationship with Ropo."
"Hmph, like I'd talk to you bastard--"

I can call Pochi-sensei and Tama-sensei here, but let's just threaten him normally.
I cut a steel armor that's in the room in half with a magic sword in my hand.

"I wonder if you'd still utter the same thing after losing your limbs?"

I don't actually intend to carry it out, although those can be restored with high magic potion.

"--That cold-blooded face is serious huh."

Apparently, Poker Face skill is doing a good job.

"I'd rather be killed here than selling Head."

Fake Ropo pretends to be tough with shaking voice.

"Do you have a long history with Ropo?"
"Yeah.... Since I was a petty thief in Holy Kingdom Parion, it's already more than 10 years huh--"

Despite saying that he'd rather be killed, he began to leak out information like it's normal, maybe it's due to Negotiation and Questioning skills.
Apparently, the person himself doesn't seem to notice that fact.

"--Propor-aniki was going to do something big in Shiga Kingdom, so we came here to prepare the preliminary work y'see--"
"Hou, that famous Mirage huh."
"Hehee, Aniki is awesome."

Fake Ropo smoothly told the situation surrounding him like a drunk man.
I got [Confession Inducement] skill before I knew it. I allocate points to it since it seems useful.

The item that this guy used was given to him by Mirage Propor he said.

....Wait, his story earlier was a bit strange.

The positions of Ropor and this guy should have been like the subcontractors of Mirage.
I understand if Ropor sees Shinkiro as his aniki (elder brother/senior), but shouldn't this guy refer to him as ojiki?[1]

The custom might be different, but let's try confirming it.

"Mirage Propor isn't your ojiki but your aniki?"
"Isn't that a given? He's my aniki who took me out of the slum."
"Wasn't it Ropor?"
"But of course--Head is a benefactor."
"Benefactor of what?"
"What, you ask.... I wonder what?"

Fake Ropor falls silence with a dubious face.
He looks similar to Baron Muno and the others who were manipulated by the demon's mind magic.

--My Crisis Perception is reacting.

A silver light flies, aiming for me and Fake Ropor.
I catch that with [Magic Hand] and put it into my Storage, and counterattacked the invisible

assailant without preparation.

"How did you know my location zamasu?"

Ropor who flew from my kick raises his head from the debris.

--Zamasu?!

Ignoring the fake Ropor who's screaming behind, I kick Ropor who's standing up again.
Breaking the defense he had formed by crossing his arms, I kicked him again to the debris.

Looks like he's camouflaging from the magic essence, his information has disappeared from the AR reading.
Then let's bluff here.

"--What's the green demon doing in a place like this?"

Hearing my words, Ropor's face becomes like a Noh mask.
On his right left arm, I found the same bracelet that the fake Ropor was wearing.

"To be found out by a mere level 50 white haired kid like this, how pathetic zamasu."

I take out the holy sword Durandal from Storage and slash at Ropor who's cackling like a frog, or to be exact, the green demon with it.

Of course, the aim is the bracelet on its left arm.

I smash the countless ice swords that have appeared around the demon with [Break Magic] chantlessly, and cut its left arm with Durandal in my hand.
I tried to put the bracelet together with the falling left arm into the Storage, but it was repelled.

--Then.

I incinerate its left arm with [Forge] magic.

The heat from the blast blows the underground thief hideout into pieces.
I don't intend to be a man-killer, so I reluctantly protect the fake Ropor with [Flexible Shield] and [Shelter] magic.

Surprisingly, the bracelet persists even while covered in flame.
I catch the bracelet inside the flame with [Magic Hand], and put it into the Storage this time.

And then, the green demon splits the smoke, attacking me.
Matching its name, it's holding a green magic sword in its hand.

I merely bend my body to evade the attacking magic sword, and then swing the holy sword while in unnatural stance, cutting its body in half.
I felt slight resistant cutting an opponent that looked exactly like a human, but since the

inside was a demon, carelessly holding back would bring a chance for it, so I hardened my heart.

Just like yesterday, the blood spilling from it produce white smoke.
From between the white smoke gaps, I see the mock body that has been split standing. It feels surreal since it looks like a human.

As I stare at the crumbling mock body, its information is displayed on the AR reading like usual.

Its name has become, [Ropor(Fake)], and the race is [Human(Demon)].
Looks like it can still disguise itself even without the bracelet, but its original state can't deceive my Menu.

I record the information on the AR before it disappears along with black smoke.
It seems it has disguise, hiding, camouflage skills, along with [Mind Magic] and [Ice Magic].

"--Let's end the opening act. We will be back with the enthronement of His Highness. Enjoy your short-lived peace while you can zamasu!"

The mock body completely disappeared after leaving such parting threat.

....Apparently, it can't hide its ending word when it's worked up.

The marker of the mock body has disappeared from the map.
Looks like the mock body was treated like it had died when it disappeared, so it's gone from the marker column.

When I check on it, the [Thief God Harness] bracelet that I've collected from the green demon and the fake Ropor is a set of three items.
In addition to having the effect of inhibiting recognition and manipulating your own information, it can also let the people who equip it to exchange their locations by teleport.

Since I had nothing to lose, I tried searching for the last one, and found the owner in an orphanage in the outer circumference of the Royal Capital.
Now then, I guess I'll settle this before the breakfast--

◇

"Boy. Is that bandana yours?"

I ask the white haired boy who's drawing water from the orphanage's water well.
The boy has the name Shin like a Japanese would, but his face looks like a Caucasian.

"--That's right."

Shin boy hits the bandana with his hand after faltering a bit.
This bandana is the last of [Thief God Harness]. There's a closed eye picture drawn on the

forehead part.

"Where did you get it?"
"I got it from a dead old beggar who was squashed under the debris during the monsters attack before."

....Fumu, so that old man was the original owner huh.
No, there's a possibility that Shin boy is in disguise.

"Let me borrow it for a bit."
"Ah--"

I snatch Shin boy's bandana with [Magic Hand].
Shin boy leaked out voice of surprise since it seemed he never thought that I would snatch it while crossing my arms.

His name and race don't change even without the bandana. His level is still 3 too.
The places that have changed are the Skill column and Detail column. His [One-handed Sword] skill disappears and [Pain Resistance] skill appears, his detailed information changes into blank.

Oh wait, his title has increased too--this is?!

I prevent looking surprised with Poker Face skill, and ask the protesting boy.

"What did you do before coming to this orphanage?"
"Dunno."
"There's no way you don't know right?"
"It's true. I don't have any memory before I was picked up by the director here."

Shin boy shouts on verge of becoming angry.

Judging from his appearance, he doesn't seem to be lying.
Considering his blank detail, his memory loss is probably a fact.

"Hero, demon lord, highness--Do you recognize any of those words?"
"I've heard about heroes and demon lords from aunties' stories who came to the orphanage. As for 'highness', the princess and the plump man at the academy were called that."

I ask for more details from Shin boy, it seems to be about princess Menea and Souya-kun the illegitimate child.
Come to think of it, the name Shin came out in Arisa's story too.

"Last question. What's your relationship with the dead beggar?"
"He was an old man who often talked about something I didn't understand whenever he found me."
"What kind of talk?"

Shin boy seems to dislike the old man, he looks fed up.

"'What do you think of freedom, or enthronement, or sacrifice', those complete nonsense."

Freely offering sacrifices for the enthronement huh.
That old man might have been a member of Light of Liberty.

"....He-hey, if you want that bandana, I'll sell it to you for one copp-no one silver coin."

Shin boy talked so, what a godsend.
I'd be hesitant to take away a keepsake, but if it can be solved with money, then it's a simple matter.

At any rate, leaving this item alone is too dangerous.

"Very well, I'll buy it."

I give him a silver coin together with a black bandana from my Storage.

"....This is?"
"Wear that instead. It's a cheap item but it's better than nothing right?"
"Y-yeah....I'll take it."

Shin boy tries to behave curtly, but his mouth loosens.
Looks like he's pleased with the homemade recognition inhibition black bandana.

"Farewell. Boy."

I turn my back from Shin Boy--Hero Shin, and leave that place.

Yes, he was concealing the title [Hero].
I gave him the recognition inhibition bandana in order to hide his title.

It might be good to give him a holy wooden sword for training the next time we meet.
I'll consult about him with a real hero, Hikaru.

1. Sort of "uncle" version of aniki I guess

13-11. Local Hero

Satou's here. When I became a working adult, there were many times when I was forced to fight for 24 hours. When you lack of sleep, you become short-tempered and tend to fail, so I desperately defended for three-hour sleep privilege at the time I hadn't got a cheat body.

◇

"Sorry, I have something to ask you--"

I moved to the abandoned fortress in Muno territory, and asked Hikaru at the mountaintop using Telephone.

『Hero? Maybe he's not a hero summoned by god Parion's secret art, but a local hero?』

Local.... They're not vegetables.

『There were only a few of them during my era. Like the lizardkin or dogkin heroes.』

When I think about it, I'm also similar to a local hero.
I got the title [Hero] after defeating Wagahai-kun after all--that's right, I remember now.

--The title Hero is obtained after you've passed beyond the point of life and death

Zen the [No Life King] said such things before.
That guy wanted me to gain the title Hero by driving me to the wall.

Shin boy might have passed a certain experience that was enough to make his hair white and became a Hero.
That might be the cause of his memory loss too.

Next, I tell the thing I've heard from Shin boy to Hikaru.

『Sacrifices huh.... Perhaps the demons might be thinking of using that Shin boy to make the demon lord into a [True Demon Lord].』
"What's that?"
『Umm you see. When a hero defeats a demon lord, their title becomes [True Hero] right. If a demon lord defeats a hero, its title won't change, but it'll get abruptly stronger. The orc demon lord that I talked to you about back then was like that too~. Every time it defeated a hero, its power increased and the demon lord erosion got worse.』

Fumu, there's no way you'd level up from defeating just one opponent with the same level as yours, so heroes and demon lords probably have special growth element to each other.
The gods might have set it like that.

『Okay. Ichirou-nii seems busy and all, so I'll indirectly guard him once I get back to the Royal Capital.』

"I'm sorry, thanks."

I'm thankful to Hikaru's suggestion.
There's no particular problem even if a demon lord becomes [True Demon Lord] and relatively powers up, but I don't feel like abandoning someone who's going to be sacrificed by the demons.
However, it'll be sometime before Hikaru returns to the Royal Capital, so I'll have to deploy people to protect Shin boy until then.

I thank Hikaru, and then tell her about the green demon.

『Geh, that green fellow hasn't been destroyed? Aww~, that's some troublesome guy that survives.』
"Can it create mock body in arbitrary places?"
『The demon should only be able to create it in the place where the real body is. The resourceful kid in my hero party said so.』

Then it's possible to intercept the demon before it attacks by searching the demon's level regularly.

"Do you know where the demon's base is?"
『Back then it was hiding in Biroho Kingdom, but it was destroyed along with the city by Ten-chan's breath, so it should be in another place right now maybe?』
"The present location of that?"
『Umm, I don't have a map now so I don't know. It's around the west-northwest area from the Labyrinth city.』

Around the western part of Marquis Eluet's territory--the tip of the desert huh.

After checking various things, I cut the call with Hikaru.

I've decided to go to the demon's former base I heard from Hikaru earlier before returning to Boruenan village.
I move to the prepared teleport base in the vast desert, and search for the demon's level.
I couldn't find the green demon with search even though I went out of my way here.

Using this opportunity, I stop by the labyrinth's villa, stock some tomatoes for breakfast, and teleport to Boruenan village.

◇

I was thinking of telling Arisa and Liza my real name and the matter about the Dragon Valley after the breakfast, but the chase took more time than I had though, so I decided to postpone it until evening.
It's not something that needs to be told in a hurry anyway.

We went back to the Royal Capital's mansion from the Boruenan Village, and then I sent the children to the school.

When I was preparing to go out with the carriage after changing my clothes, Zena-san and her friends visited.

They're slower than usual today.
Usually they would have come over before the children went to school after breakfast.

"Welcome, Zena-san. It seems you were called by Earl Seryuu yesterday--"
"I'm sorry, Viscount-sama!"

When I was talking, Lilio who was behind Zena-san apologized.
Since it seems there's something, I guide them to the living room and listen to their story.

"--I see. In short, the Earl misunderstood the relationship between me and Zena-san?"
"Un, I spoke a bit too much--"

Fumu, there's nothing between us that would have led to misunderstanding though....
I heard that magic soldiers are precious, so perhaps the Earl thought that I was seducing his retainer to be mine?

"Viscount-sama, please take this."

Miss Iona submits a letter from beside Lilio who's apologizing on her knees.
Looking at the seal of the sealing wax, it seems to be from Earl Seryuu.

"--It seems to be an invitation for a luncheon."

I show the letter to the members of Zena Squad, write a letter for my consent and pass it to Zena-san.
The date written in the letter is tomorrow.
Being sudden has its limit too.

I write the luncheon in the schedule book of the menu, narrowly fitting it into the fourth day of the Kingdom Conference.
This conference is over tomorrow. Three days after the day after tomorrow is the long-awaited auction.

--Let's get through it quickly!

◇

I meet Consul Nina and Earl Muno during the short morning break that day, and tell them about the lunch with Earl Seryuu tomorrow.

According to Consul Nina, it's most likely going to be about the newly created Labyrinth of Seryuu City.

"Specifically, he probably wants you, who have several Mithril explorers as your retainers, and a group of excellent explorers as the lower branch in the Labyrinth City."

I didn't understand the meaning of lower branch for an instant, but it's probably about the Explorer Training School and the graduates.
I don't actually have the authority to order the Pendora guys, but it seems the surrounding people see it like that.

"He's probably giving you that magic soldier as your mistress to buy your favor."

The fact that it's 'mistress' not 'wife' seems to be the problem with her peerage.

Ms Nina warned me not to make some strange promise with Earl Seryuu, but they fundamentally leave it to my will.

The short break is over, so I thank Ms Nina and the others and then go back to the conference.

It's not like I'm against helping the Earl with the labyrinth management, but I want to avoid turning Zena-san into a political piece.

◇

During the lunch, I order Echigoya Firm's Manager to employ several watchers for Shin boy.
Though they're called watchers, they're not some high level spies, but they're just some non-combatants detective-like people.

I told her to only make them watch Shin boy.
They're not going at it directly, they're only going to report back if there's anyone suspicious contacting or monitoring the boy.

Even if the boy is abducted for sacrifice, it's possible to rescue him as long as they report fast.
Or rather, if the mastermind kidnaps him, I could arrest them all and finish the case.

....It might be slightly heartless of me, but he's not a friend right now after all.

◇

Evening after I came back to the mansion from the conference, the butler reported that there were many thieves caught in the courtyard's trap.
It seems they're unrelated to Ropo, but after the meal I'll change into Kuro and round them all up in their hideout.

The sole healing time is when I listen to the children's story about the school during our meal.

"Master, listen! Nanodesu."

Pochi who's waiting for the second helping of the thick steak appeals in high tension.

"What is it? Say it."

"Today we had a training with the teacher of teacher, the great teacher!"
"He was strong~?"

Tama who's eating shrimps wholly with their shells earnestly nods.

Someone whom these two refer as strong huh....

"What's the name of this great teacher?"
"E~m"
"Great teacher Heim nanodesu."

--As I thought.

It's probably Shiga Eight Sword Heim the [Weed].
If I'm not mistaken his seat was raised to be the second seat of Shiga Eight Swords recently.

"Pochi went like 'zushat' then 'kyuit' but then he blocked like 'pon' nodesu."
"When Tama went from behind, he blocked by turning the sword behind~?"

He's someone whose level equals the two's without power-leveling, so he must have various experiences.

"Did he tell you something?"
"Come play~?"
"Come to the knight order's training center when you're free, it'll be a good practice, he said nodesu."

So he really was soliciting them.
Unlike Liza, these two are minor with peerage, so they can't be employed in the military of Shiga Kingdom without my permission as their guardian.
Yet, I'm a bit worried, so--

"You can go to the training center, but you have to go with Liza. Okay?"
"Aye aye Sir~"
"Yes nanodesu."

I told them so.
I did it without asking Liza's approval, but it should be a good training for her since she'll be against Shiga Eight Swords whose power are on par with her.

"How about Mia and Arisa, what were you doing today?"
"U~n, I helped Mia's lecture, and also--"
"Magic cloth."

Mia interrupted Arisa who was groaning with folded arms, and muttered.

"Ah, right right. We had a practice to make magic cloth by embroidering magic circuit on magic cloth using silver thread."

"He~, is it similar to yuriha fiber cloth that the elves and brownies make?"

I asked if it was the same as yuriha fiber that I usually wear, but Arisa shook her head, denying it.

"It's like an inferior version of it I think. They said that after the embroidery is finished, the cloth is then soaked in liquid made by alchemists, then the liquid will be attached."

I guess it's similar to plating?

When I search the documents I have, there are recipes about it among them.
It was the technique which I ignored in the beginning since it needed a large-scale facility. Many expensive materials became usable once I arrived at Boruenan Village so I completely forgot about it. Embroidery is troublesome, but let's try finding something to use it on.

"Arisa, special training."
"Eh~, embroidery is minute and delicate, I can't~"
"Ufufu, I'll teach you too so let's work hard."

Looks like Arisa is bad at embroidery even though she's good at sewing.
With Mia and Lulu teaching you, temper your embroidery skill and girl's power.

In addition, Shiro and Crow spent their time in the childhood school without any mishaps.
Apparently, an upper noble daughter who likes birds is protecting them from people who dislike demi-humans.

"Teena-sama said that she once participated in the Princess's tea party too."
"Un, she said that. Crow, take the bone."
"Shiro, I'll do it, but you have to become independent okay?"

Shiro who likes fish pushes the works of taking the fish bones to Crow.
I found many hit when I searched the name Teena that Kuro mentioned, but the only one who was in the upper noble area was the granddaughter of Marquis Kelten.
While I'm at it, I ask them the name of the princess, turns out it's the little sister of the forbidden library's princess from the same mother. The world seems quite small.

Next, I ask Lulu and Nana about their activities in the royal castle's kitchen.

"Today we made a lot of swe~et snacks."

From tomorrow evening after the Kingdom Conference is over, there will a ball held every day until the closing of the auction, and so she showed them her idea for new snacks, and she was taught the recipes of the royal court.

The children react to the word of sweet snacks.

"You serious!"
"I got a lot of them as presents, so let's bring them to Boruenan Village and eat them

together with everyone."
"Snack~"
"Wa~i, nanodesu!"

I smile at Lulu and reply, "I'm looking forward to it."

Since Zena-san and her friends don't seem like they'll be coming due to the luncheon, Liza is going to train with the elf masters in Boruenan village today.
"Just a bit more and it feels like I'd get an idea for a new technique", so said Liza.

Pochi and Tama looked like they were interested with the new technique too, so we went to Boruenan Village a bit early.
Now then, after reluctantly parting with them, guess I'll start processing the remaining businesses today.

I retrieve Echigoya firm's members who are on business trips for the Royal Capital's revival matter, and also finish constructing the branch offices and sending the permanent members there at once, I also finish up other tasks.

After raiding the thief's hideout, I also carried out the power-leveling of Echigoya Firm.

This one is going better than expected, their levels have been increased to 30 using only the cultivated monsters.
Soon, it might be good to get in touch with Zena and Lady Karina as Kuro to level them up to 30.

....Well, I guess I can do that after the auction and I'm less busy.

I produce scarecrows for sensing demons all-night, preparing them to do the monitoring job for when I'm asleep.
Deploying the scarecrows in the territories under the control of the king is easy with Unit Arrangement, but as expected, I feel that my mental fatigue has piled up.

The Kingdom Conference should be over tomorrow, I have to take a break once Hikaru comes to the Royal Capital.

◇

In the morning of the last day of the Kingdom Conference, the allocation of the magic cores produced by the Labyrinth City for each territories reached the conclusion.
The groundworks seems to have been laid beforehand, so without any problem--

"Isn't it too outrageous for the supply to our territory to be suspended for three years! Our territory won't be able to be restored!"

--Looks like I can't say that.

With a desperate upset face, the young Earl Lesseu protests to the King and the Consul.

I don't know how is he going to use the magic cores for the restoration, but it seems he's dissatisfied that the magic cores that should have been for his territory are diverted to the knights dispatched to Bisthal Dukedom, and the royal capital's restoration.
He was probably left out during the groundwork-making.

I'm not really interested in it, so I change places with Satou doll I used during Nanashi's ennoblement, and take a brief nap.

Good night....

13-12. Luncheon with Earl Seryuu

Satou's here. The first time I knew the word harem was from a certain story in the Arabian Nights when I was in elementary school. I remember asking the young female teacher, "What's a harem?", and taught, "It's when there are a lot of wives."
If I did that now, I'd be sued of doing a sexual harassment for sure.

◇

It seems the half-hour nap is quite good for me as now I'm able to tackle the luncheon with Earl Seryuu with a clear head.

Thanks to that I remember that I've completely forgotten to talk with Arisa and Liza about the Dragon God slaying.
Piled up fatigue is not good after all.
The preparation for the last day of the auction is very quite enough anyway, I'll take it easy until the day.

While thinking like so, I'm guided by the chamberlain of Earl Seryuu's house to the dining room for guest in the royal castle.
It seems I'm the last of the guests, inside the room are Earl Seryuu couple, his retainers Viscount Belton couple, knights couple of Kigori house whom I don't recognize, and for some reason, Parion Temple's Miko Auna-san and Zena-san who looks nervous too.

Kigori couple probably serve as the Earl's guards.
The husband is a level 40 knight, and the wife is a level 37 magic knight who can use earth magic, they're the strongest-class of warriors in the territory.

I understand that Miko Auna-san is the Earl's daughter from checking the details in the menu.
I thought I had seen her before, turned out she was the Miko-san who healed Zena-san when we first met. Incidentally, she also got me to learn the holy magic skill.

I thank the Earl for inviting me as a lip service, and then greet and introduce myself to the other members in annoying noble-like manner.

I'm guided to the seat of honor in front of the Earl.
Judging from this placement, it doesn't seem to be that bad of a talk.

I talk to Zena-san who's taken the seat beside me in low voice.

"Your dress today looks quite gorgeous. It really suits you."
"T-thank you very much. They're something lent to me by the madam's lady's maid."

I see, I thought it seems bolder than the usual Zena-san who usually wears neat clothes.

"You don't have to be that tense. Leave it to me and enjoy the delicious food."
"Y-yes."

I haven't eased Zena-san's tension enough, but since Earl Seryuu is looking here like he's evaluating me, I cut the talk.

Unlike the one with the prime minister, the luncheon is centered on very normal royal court dishes with the specialty of Earl Seryuu's chef, croquette dish, as the main course.

The conversation during the meal was also quite normal the whole time, with me talking about the detail when I met Zena-san, and them thanking me for cooperating with the Seryuu Earldom's selected corps in the labyrinth city.

I thought the luncheon would end just like that, but then when the strawberries with sugar and honey sauce were distributed as the dessert, the earl instructed the waiters to leave and the main topic began--.

◇

"--I'll get straight to the point. Marry Auna. Don't you want to be a member of our Earl house and be the one in charge of the labyrinth management?"

Oh, he's quite straight.
Still, I think that's a bit too excessive for an upstart 16 year old noble.

I don't know where the Earl got the idea of letting a noble from another house to be in charge of the labyrinth management with its enormous right, but the opposition from the nobles in his territory should be quite fierce.

Let's decline it quickly.

"It is quite an honor, but someone weak like me is not fit for it. Pardon me of being presumptuous, but such an important task may be more suited to someone more experienced."
"--Hmph, he declined without even showing any worry huh. I heard he was unselfish, but to think it's to this degree."

The earl seemed to have expected my refusal, I picked up the earl's faint muttering with Attentive Ears and Lip Reading skills.
The earl gives an eye signal to Viscount Belton, making him stop trying to get the sweet strawberry and talk.
Looks like there are a lot more sweet tooths than I thought.

"Sir Pendragon. You might be misunderstanding, a member of the earl house isn't simply marrying to another earl house. It means that the earl is also giving you the right to succeed the house."

--Uwah, I'd like to refrain from that even more.

"That is such an honor. I do not understand the reason as to why Earl-sama regards someone like me that high, but the lineage of a long-standing noble blood should not be polluted by an upstart like me."

For now, I'll be using the lovely word of "upstart" to flatter the pride of nobles to refuse him.

I'm not really interested in managing labyrinth, and I'm even more uninterested in succeeding the earl.
I might have been tempted by a cool beauty type woman like Lady Auna when I was still in the former world, but now that I've gotten used to beauties like Lulu and Aze-san, I don't feel bewildered.

"Lineage huh--. The aristocratic nobles may prize their lineage, but our Earl house puts more important in valor. Besides, it's useless even if you feign ignorance. I have already understood all of your strength."

....Strength?

Don't tell me, there were witnesses who saw me using the Meteor Shower?
For the time being, I use [Poker Face] skill to hide my surprise and ask him.

"What is this about?"
"--Since you seem to have no idea about it, I'll speak of it."

The earl raises a corner of his mouth and talks in firm voice.

- The capability to escape from a labyrinth unhurt without equipment.

- Saved the Muno Territory which was on the verge of being ruled by demons.

- The ability to mediate the discord in the duchy capital, and obstruct the secret maneuver of the demon lord sympathizers.

- Distinguished himself as an explorer in the labyrinth city, and having the foresight to establish an educational facility for rearing future explorers.

- Mingling with an elf, and also having an amicable relationship with the fairykins who are known to avert humans.

--He really has it thoroughly investigated.

Nevertheless, even though they shouldn't have been something that amazing, when it's listed by the earl like this, 'it's nothing great' feels like an illusion.

"These much should be known by the prime minister and the viceroys. However, the one thing I'm looking in wonder is about the beastkin girls who are with you."

Our beastkin girls, what about them?

--It can't be.

"His complexion doesn't change huh.... Looks like he's not merely an unselfish good-natured person."

Without knowing the unrest in my mind, I picked up the earl's muttering with Attentive Ears Skill.

"I wonder how the lords would think if they knew that the lizardkin girl who defeated the strongest in Shiga Kingdom, Sir Julberg, had one digit level one year ago."

I see, he's grasped the growth the beastkin girls huh.
Come to think of it, their levels and skills were examined with the original Yamato Stone when we got out of Seryuu Labyrinth.

If it's known that warriors equaling Shiga Eight Swords can be mass produced in a year, it's true that people who think of doing bad thing would appear.
Let's hide it and probe the earl's intention.

"In consideration of the upper class nobles' hearts, I'm really...."
"I've said that feigning ignorance is useless. You probably collected magic potions by investing vast amount of capital, and fought continuously in the labyrinth. However, that too depends on the person who does the instructing."

The earl pauses and stares at me to gauge my reaction.
Far from investing, I got positive gain instead.

"I highly value your ability. With your cooperation, the labyrinth management should be able to be in operation in five years. It should be able to be put in motion in 10 years even without your help, but then there would be unpleasant meddling from the kingdom and the lineage nobles."

It seems the Negotiation skill is in effect, the Earl spoke something that didn't need to be said too. You shouldn't have talked about that before getting agreement from the other party you know.

"Come to our house, and I'll make you to be in charge of the labyrinth management, furthermore for 10 years, I'll give you 10 percents of the magic core yield excluding the king's shares."
"That is quite an extraordinary reward."

I'm not attracted to it, but it's quite lavish.
It seems my feeling was transmitted, the earl twitches one of his brows as if he's slightly offended.

"Is it insufficient?"
"No, as I've said before, the reward and the position are too excessive for me."

When I was going to decline like that, the earl covers my words.

"That reminds me, you're in good term with Zena of Marientail house right."

--Like I thought, that one came huh.

I've slightly expected it when Zena-san was here attending the luncheon, looks like she'll be rolled up in some annoying politic.

I must prevent that by any means.

"I'll give the permission if you want to make her your mistress. If you want to make her your wife, then you can marry her after she's been adopted by Belton. I don't mind as long as she's after Auna. If you feel dutiful toward Earl Muno, then I guess the first wife is Soruna-dono or Karina-dono, the second wife is Sera-dono of Duke Oyugock, Aune is the third wife, and Zena is the fourth wife?"

What's with that harem.

I might have been fascinated with the harem route with all those beauties if I don't have someone I hold dear, but let's decline it firmly.
In the first place, I don't understand why Sera is mixed in there.

For the Oracle Miko to return to secular life and become a wife, there's no meaning--huh?

"Even if the first wife has to be Earl Muno's daughter, I'd like for Auna to be the second wife instead of Sera-dono--"

There's something that's bugging me a bit, so I interrupt the earl who's having a fervent speech when he's taking a breath.

"Earl-sama, I do not intend to have multiple wives. Moreover, if my memory serves me correct, Auna-sama should be an Oracle Miko. I thought she couldn't marry unless she returned to secular life?"

In addition, the only one that has Oracle skill in Seryuu city should be only her.

"Hmph, then that means she can just return to secular life. We can just have Parion Temple and Garleon Temple in the Royal Capital to send their miko. There is nothing to fret."

The earl splendidly ignored my remark about monogamy, and informed me about the reason why Lady Auna could marry.

"If the reward isn't enough, then I'll set another one."

Even though I've been saying that it's already too excessive since awhile ago, it doesn't seem to reach him somehow.
No wait, rather it's because I'm refusing that he pretends not to notice it huh?

"I'll put up the decree that prohibits discrimination against demi-humans in my territory. If you wish, I can also add 2000 demi-human slaves from the territory in the reward."

The discrimination won't be gone even with the decree, but legal abolition of demi-human discrimination is attractive.
I can also release the slaves to restore the abandoned cities and districts in Muno territory.

However, in exchange for that, I'll have to marry someone whom I'm not sufficiently familiar with, please leave me out that.

I don't know how the earl perceived my momentary silence, he opens his mouth after nodding with serious face.

"You cannot decide immediately huh. Then I'll give you half a year time."

I feel the sense of foreboding crisis from the earl if half a year has passed.
There should be no need for him to be that persistent with me....

"I will let you be in charge of the labyrinth selected corps during this half a year. Zena of Marientail house--"
"Y-yes."
"Go aid Viscount Pendragon as his attendant in commanding them."
"Yes, I respectfully receive the order."

Zena-san salutes the earl like a soldier while wearing dress.

Thus, Zena-san has become like my attendant for a period of time.
It's vexing to be forced like this by Earl Seryuu, but it's not bad to have the authority to accompany Zena-san in the labyrinth.

Furthermore, I have half a year, that should be enough time to nurture someone who's more capable in managing the labyrinth than me.
If I'm not mistaken there should be several Seryuu City's officials who have pushed their way into Explorer's guild staff training with my mediation.
The female officials were sharp and able, but I'd better train the male official who seems to have deep thinking and good at negotiation and push him to Earl Seryuu.

Looks like I can do something about that one.
Rather, I'm scared that I might have ridden the harem route little by little....

13-13. Evening Party at the Royal Capital

Satou's here. I got fed up of long meetings without reaching any conclusion when I first entered the company, but I was able to calmly participate after knowing the effect of letting out the steam by grumbling.

◇

"--With that, the Kingdom Conference this time comes to an end. Anyone who has any objection can stand up."

The prime minister who's acting as the speaker declares so as a formality.
There hadn't been anyone who objected at this point for 300 years.

The reason why I used past tense was because I saw a young lord stood up among the seats for territory lords in the front.

"Young master, please take your seat."
"Let me go, do you intend to force misery upon our people."

The young lord violently shakes off his close-aide who urged him to sit down in low voice, and scowls at the prime minister.

"Earl Lesseu huh. State it if you have an objection."

Earl Lesseu's shoulders shake from the deep voice of the prime minister that has intimidating pressure.

"T-then, I'll state it. I want you to reconsider the share of magic cores supplied to our territory!"

Earl Lesseu appealed clearly, but since his voice was trembling, it didn't have that much of a force.

"That should have come to an agreement during the morning conference--"

The prime minister tells Earl Lesseu in an easy-to-understand manner.
The earl seems to be dissatisfied, he looks down while shutting his mouth.

By the way, as for the main problem, the magic cores themselves, although they're needed in mines, as fuel for the mobile base's magic furnace, and production of magic tools, it's hard to say that they're indispensable in people's life.

The magic power needed in cities are supplied by the City Core, pulled from the Source. A large number of magic cores shouldn't be needed inside the city as long as there isn't a magic tool that can guzzle down magic power like nothing like the Mithril magic furnace in the self-governing dominion of Bolhart.

Furthermore, the distribution of the magic cores that's controlled is only the ones from the labyrinth city, the ones gotten from the monsters inside the lords' territories are left to the lords' own discretion.
If it's insufficient, then he can just hunt the monsters in his territory.
Of course that's if he has enough force in his territory.

"--The thing your territory needs is the restoration of public order right? The share of magic cores that should have been for your territory are diverted for the magic furnaces of the mobile bases that will carry the kingdom knights marching toward Bishtal Dukedom, in exchange, the kingdom knights will exterminate rampant monsters in your territory to secure the highways. You too agreed to that plan did you not?"
"T-that is..."

I see, I can read the prime minister's motive a bit.

The prime minister probably wants to prioritize securing the highways of Lesseu Earldom.
Moreover, Earl Lesseu pays the expense himself.

Considering the location, it'll be difficult to secure the supply line for the forces that are going to quell the rebellion in Bisthal Dukedom if the highways in Lesseu Earldom aren't safe.
Furthermore, it would have disturbed the circulation of money and goods from the various northern territories, especially from Marquis Eluett's territory to Royal Capital.

It's only seen from economical and military point of views, but it's probably not wrong.
And, apparently, it's only Earl Lesseu who doesn't seem to notice that.

Eearl Lesseu probably wants the magic core supply for the sake of restarting the precious metal mines in his territory.
He must be wanting to prioritize the profit gains of the earl's house and his retainers which will help him seize the authority among the nobles of his territory.

"I've said many times, the knights exterminating the monsters in the highways should be more effective in restoring the territory more than the supply of magic cores. What is the point of the magic cores for the magic furnaces in the mines and the forts if the safety of the people cannot be guaranteed."

The prime minister talks to Earl Lesseu like admonishing him.
His gentleness is like slowly strangling with a silk rope.

"Then I will yield the share of magic cores for our territory to you--"

Earl Lesseu raises his face that's full of expectation after hearing that, but his expression clouds over once again when he sees the speaker.
That is because the other party is Duke Bishtal.

"--In exchange, the knights will pass through Lesseu Earldom without stopping, and prioritize suppressing the rebellion in my territory."
"Th-that is..."

"You wish for the supply of magic cores, so what are you dissatisfied about!"

Earl Lesseu shudders from the angry voice of Duke Bisthal.
Furthermore, the retainers of Duke Bishtal and nobles of pedigree send jeers as if backing him.

"Please wait, Duke Bishtal--"

The prime minister interrupts them to stop Duke Bisthal and the others who have lost their tempers.
Apparently, the Kingdom Conference is getting an extension.

Good grief.

◇

In the end, the Conference extended for four hours, and the evening party that should have started tonight got postponed to tomorrow.
In addition, about the treatment of Lesseu Earldom, it was settled before it could objected.

There were many nobles of pedigree who looked disappointed, it seemed they were expecting either the king to take away the young Earl Lesseu's territorial lordship after incurring his displeasure, or for the earl to rebel.
The position of a viceroy that can freely control the City Core seems to be that attractive for many nobles.

It seems the neighboring nobles, particularly Earl Zettsu and Earl Kuhanou whose territories adjoin Lesseu Earldom want to loan magic cores for him.

While feeling slightly fed up by the scheming nobles, I walk on the corridor.

I head toward the parking lot to meet our girls who were going to attend the evening party.
I catch sights of several ladies who have gathered for the evening party boarding their carriages away while fuming and complaining.

Moreover, it seems the fact that the cause of the evening party's suspension is Earl Lesseu has been spread, so it'll likely become a severe handicap for the earl who needs to find a bride after his engagement with the princess was canceled.

This is somebody else's problem, but I think Earl Lesseu should have prioritized increasing his allies rather than resources.

"Sir Pendragon!"

I look at the source of the voice calling me and see Toruma waving his hands beyond the crowd.
It seems he was going to attend the evening party too, he's dressed more stylishly than usual.

"After this, there will be an evening party by the nobles of the duchy capital and Cousin-dono in a noble's residence, why don't Satou-dono come too?"

[Cousin-dono] whom Toruma mentioned is probably Earl Muno.
The glutton nobles of Oyugock Dukedom eh, I haven't had many chances to talk with them after coming to the Royal Capital, so this is just right.

"Master~"

Arisa who's being carried by Nana under her arm is calling from the opposite side.
Beside the two, there are Pochi and Tama who are being carried under Liza's arms, and Lulu who's leading Mia by hand.

"We're invited by Her Highness for a tea party, won't Master come?"
"Huh? Wasn't the promise for the day after tomorrow?"

I check the schedule book in Menu while feeling puzzled in my mind.
Yup, there's no mistake, it's the day tomorrow--during the daytime of the second day of the auction.

"That's different from this. We got an invitation letter from her highness's lady's attendant since she was free after the evening party's cancellation."
"Then, Arisa and the others can go themselves."

If an upper nobleman comes to an unmarried princess's place in evening, it'll likely become a scandal in the royal palace.

"Arisa-dono, who is this highness? Don't tell me, one of her highness princesses is calling Sir Pendragon?"

Toruma who was left behind in my conversation with Arisa raises voice of surprise.
Looks like he's too surprised, he can't speak.

"Oh my, isn't that Viscount Pendragon."
"By princess, is it either the 9th princess or the 11th princess?"
"Or it might be the Forbidden Library's master."
"That reminds me, she gave up the declining Earl Lesseu right...."

Unexpectedly, Toruma's voice was too loud, the whispers of the surrounding nobles are spreading like ripples on water.

....Read the mood Toruma.

"It's just that Arisa and Mia are on friendly terms with her. I have not even met her."
"....W-what, is that it."

I looked at Toruma, but the claim that I had not met the princess was directed toward the nobles who were peeking at us.

I'd be glad if the scandalous rumor would decrease with this.

"Arisa and Mia should go to Her Highness's tea party, it won't be good if it's just children, so would Lulu accompany them?"
"Yes, I understand."

Lulu was originally a maid working in Rumooku Kingdom's castle, so she should know well the etiquette for this king of things.

"Mwu, adult."
"Of course I know. I mean that other people wouldn't know that you're an adult from appearance."

I soothe Mia who's insisting that she's an adult by patting her head.

If we go by the inside, Arisa is probably the most adult, but I didn't touch that subject.
In this world, there are many things that are better left unsaid.

I forgot to tell Arisa that the prototype spell for separating liquid had been completed in the meeting just now, but I can just tell her later.
It might be fun to surprise Arisa since the spell is not only using water magic but also lightning magic for the separation part.

◇

Nana went back to the mansion since she was worried about Shiro and Crow, so I participate in the evening party of Duke Oyugock with the beastkin girls.

"Pochi-dono, and Tama-dono are truly adorable."
"Truly, truly!"
"Embarrassed~?"
"Pochi is shy if you praise her that much nodesu."

The ones who are praising Tama and Pochi who are dressed in cute party dresses are Earl Muno and his animal-lover noble friends.

"This roast beef dish comes from our ranch. Please eat it to your heart's content."
"What's this now, this duck dish won't lose to it."
"Delishlish~?"
"It's verry delicious nodesu! Pochi can't have Master and Liza not eat this nodesu!"

The two are eating the recommended dishes that come one after another with relish.
By the way, Liza has been caught by duchy capital's knights and military officers, they currently are having a heated discussions about martial arts.
Her eyes are locked-on to the whole roasted cow on the table though, so I think I should help her out when the time is right.

And, as for me--.

"This is tempura!"
"I am sorry for making Sir Pendragon who's become a viscount to serve the table, but there's no one who can create this taste besides you sir."
"...Bliss."

I was caught by the upper nobles of Duchy Capital starting with Marquis Lloyd, and Earl Houen, and made to fry tempura.
Dear me, I'm glad I didn't bring Lulu.
If I did, her special dress would be spoiled by the oil.

"This tentsuyu is also wonderful."
"When this tender shrimp in this crispy coating are entangled in the tentsuyu sauce, indescribable harmony comes into play."

--Are you some kind of food reporter.

It seems an incident was progressing while I was retorting like that in my mind.
Screams come from among the ladies at the same time red luminous points appear on the radar.

"Arrest~?"
"Stealing is bad nodesuyo?"

When I look there, a handsome butler and a gorgeous-looking maid are being held down by Tama and Pochi.
Apparently, they saw them stealing and then arrested them.
It seems the ladies screamed because they were surprised to see the two suddenly appeared with Flickering Movement.

I leave the tempura pot to the veteran maid and head there.

"Caught them~"
"We caught bad children nodesu."
"You two did well."

I hand over the caught thieves to the guards and praise the two.
As I pat their heads, Pochi's tail is buzzing left and right over her dress, and Tama's stretched tail can be seen behind her head.
I didn't have any turn since the other thieves who were going to casually escape from the room were caught by the secret agents of the duke who dressed as maids and butlers.

"Thank you young ladies. Thanks to you, we didn't lose our heirloom jewel."
"Don't worry be happy~"
"This much is nothing nodesu."

"Viscount Pendragon, your retainers are truly capable."
"I'm honored."

I'm thanked by the nobles who almost lost their jewelries, while the nobles and military officers who were talking to Liza are praising the two.

Still, it seems the jewelries are the objective here too.
Looks like there are still thieves remaining in the Royal Capital even after they've been culled that much. They might have gathered from the neighboring cities too.
Removing the parting gift of Mirage is quite hard.

"Viscount-sama--"

A smiling maid quietly steps up, and points at Pochi's dress that's been dirtied.
It seems the sauce from the dish were spilled on it during the arrest.

"I'm sorry, but can I borrow a room?"
"Yes, we will prepare it. We will remove the stain ourselves, so please keep enjoying your chat Viscount-Sama."
"Thank you. I'll do just that."

I give Pochi to the smiling maid, and put my hand on the shoulder of Tama who was going to follow them from behind to stop her.

"Nyu~?"
"There's a job for Ninja Tama--"

13-14. Evening Party at the Royal Capital (2)

Satou's here. Speaking of nobles, it's all about luxurious dance party. It's an important even for young nobles to have a wonderful meeting with the opposite sex, and broaden their personal connection.
There's no participant fees in Shiga Kingdom though, so it's a troubling event for the person who holds it, being forced to pay the large expense themselves.

◇

After a short time, a pink-colored shadow emerges from the balcony of the venue
Ninja Tama who appeared in shutan pose reported [Mission Complete] with hand signals.

Looks like she's arrested the friend of the thieves outside without any problem.

I send the finger signals, [Good work, return to base.]
After doing a shupin pose, Tama disappears as if melting into the shadow.

I feel that Tama's ninja skill has been taken to the extreme after getting the [Ninjutsu] skill from the level up after the fight with sakuramochi demon back then.
It looks quite useful, I should ask her to teach me Ninjutsu skill when I have some free time.

"I'm back~?"
"Good work. You've done well."
"Welcome back nanodesu."

Liza and Pochi who've come to get the whole roasted cow presents the meat on a large plate to Tama.

I'd like to challenge the whole roasted cow too, but I'm in a difficult situation since I've been caught by the elderly wives who are trying to promote their daughters and granddaughters.
Even though I ended up refusing it, I would have liked it if the other parties for the marriage meeting to be adult women at least.
No matter how you look at it, the first half of the single digit numbers are just too early.

By the way, Marquis Lloyd and Earl Haku have been called by Duke Oyugock due to the uproar earlier, so the tempura party has been dissolved.

The other nobles were still eager to eat more, but Marquis Lloyd and Earl Haku declared that they didn't want it if they couldn't eat.
They were a bit narrow-minded, but I'm not complaining myself since I got off the tempura duty thanks to it.

By accident, I see a girl who's fidgeting around like she's trying to call me, behind the wives.
I can't remember her name but her face looks familiar, so I call her after checking her name

on AR reading.

"Excuse me, a friend of mine has come, so I'll be greeting her. Let's talk about the tea party later--"

I smoothly pass through the wives who look disappointed, toward the daughter of Viscount Emlin.
Her father, Viscount Emlin, is someone who's running a Lulu fruit orchard in the outskirts of the Duchy capital. It seems he's established the orchard in one part of Muno city too recently.

"Good evening, Lina-sama. Did Viscount Emlin cannot come?"
"V-viscount Pendragon-sama! Y-you remember my name?!"

You don't have to be that surprised--in fact, I did forgot.
I thought she looked childish when we met before, but maybe because she left her home to become a lady attendant apprentice at Muno city, she looks more grown up than her 13 year old age suggests.

"Have you got used to the work of a lady attendant?"
"Y-yes. Although I still fail a lot, I'm taught various things by Soruna-sama and Pina-senpai, and I've become able to do more things little by little."

I almost wanted to pat the bashful girl's head, but I endure it since being too familiar to a young lady is not good.

"U-um, Viscount-sama. I-if you'd like--"
"Satou-sama~~"

An energetic voice flew as if drowning out Viscount Emlin's daughter who was going to say something.
When I look to the source of the voice, there's a young lady swinging her arms around while standing.
After she sensed that I had noticed her voice, she runs toward me with a smile on her whole face while lifting the edge of her dress.

"Ririna-sama, you're being vulgar!"
"Wait for me, Ririna."
"Mou, you'll be scolded by mother again."

The circle of friends of the energetic lady--Ririna, the daughter of Gururian City's viceroy, follow her from behind while complaining.

"Satou-sama!"

Along with the energetic voice unsuited for the calm evening party, a soft sensation jumped to between my arms.

"It's been awhile Ririna-sama."
"Good evening, Viscount-sama. Even though we often passed each other ever since I came to the Royal Capital, we never met even once. So I came here since I couldn't wait any longer."

Like a kitten, she nestles her cheeks on my chest with closed eyes.
Even though she's a year older than the daughter of Viscount Emlin earlier, she looks younger due to her short shoulder-length hair and cheerful gestures.

Even though they're not related, the name of the two--Lina and Ririna are confusing.
I have to be careful not to call them wrong.

"Ah, Ririna-samaa"
"Dammit, a mere upstart Viscount... So enviableee"
"Ririna, cutee"

I heard some shrieks and jealousy from the surrounding kids, so I gently put my hands on her shoulders and separate us.

Why is she this emotionally attached--that reminds me, I did defeat a lesser demon before their eyes and lectured them about magic back then.

"A lady shouldn't cling to a man besides your family in public okay?"
"Ara! Did you say I'm a lady? So happy!"
"Ririna-sama, that's enough."

She was going to hug me again, but her personal attendant held her back.
No, I mistook it due to her plain clothes, but she's also a noble--a baroness it seems.

"Viscount-sama, please forgive the young lady's rudeness."
"No no, please don't mind it--"

When I was greeting and doing some harmless lip services, a blue luminous point got reflected on the radar.
Blue dot--in other words, a friend.

"How do you do, Satou-san."

The customers are flooding in today--wait, no, that's not the right expression. I'm the one being invited after all.

"Good evening, Sera-sama."
"You're popular like always aren't you."

I turn back and see Sera as expected, who's together with other ladies.
I don't remember ever seeing the ladies around her, but according to the AR and the memo note, they seem to be the daughters of Marquis Lloyd and Earl Houen.
Not granddaughters, but daughters huh.... As expected of a different world. No wonder the

night medicines are selling well.

"Do you fancy a dance?"
"Yes, I'd be glad to."

Sera who heard a cheerful tune of the playing music invited me, so I willingly consent.

"--Aa"

There, the daughter of Viscount Emlin leaked out a small scream, and I saw her hand reaching out slightly.
I didn't notice since she was pushed to the background ever since the daughter of Gururian Viceroy, Ririna, came, but it seems she's been beside me all along.

"Ara? Perhaps you've already made a promise for a dance earlier?"
"N-no--"

The daughter of Viscount Emlin sheepishly denied Sera's question.

I feel sorry to see her looking dejected, so I decide to follow up.
It's probably alright since Sera also made an eye signal.

"--I forgot that I made a promise with her at the duchy capital back then. It was, 'I'll accompany you to a tune when we meet again in an evening party'."
"It cannot be helped if it's a promise. I will concede my turn."

I take the hand of the daughter of Viscount Emlin who lifts her face in full bloom, and head toward the center of the dance hall.
We've danced for three tunes even though I said one.

"You've really improved."
"T-thank you very much. I did my very best since I wanted to dance with Viscount-sama once again!"

I smile back to the daughter of Viscount Emlin who's looking proud.
It's not a lip service of course. She's remarkably improved compared to when we danced in the duchy capital castle back then.

The line of sights of the surrounding young nobles are gathered to the daughter of Viscount Emlin, so I tell her that.

"Your loveliness and elegance have monopolized the gazes of the young noblemen here."
"I-I am.... I-if just that one person sees me, then..."

I feel I'll misunderstand that the daughter of Viscount Emlin is in love with me when she stares at me while blushing and answering like so.

"It'd be nice if that person praises you."

"...I-I've already gotten the praise, it's already alright."
"Is that so, I'm glad for you."
"Yes...."

The daughter of Viscount Emlin smiles slightly shyly.
My protective tendency is stimulated seeing her innocence. While praying for her love to go well, I do my part as the partner of her dance while exchanging silly talks with her.

I part with the daughter of Viscount Emlin who's short of breath, and this time I bring Sera to the dance hall.

"Satou-san."
"What is it? Sera-san."

Come to think of it, I haven't danced with Sera after the duchy capital.
As always she's good even though she should have entered the shrine since she was small.

"Satou-san, umm--"

It's unusual for Sera to fumble her words.

"Is it true that you're in love with the princess?"

The rumor spreads far considering it's Toruma, I wonder if she heard something among the young ladies?

"It's a baseless rumor."
"Really?"

Even though I flatly denied, Sera's expression is still clouded.
Let's add a bit more.

"Yes, Princess Mitia of Nooroku Kingdom and Princess Menea of Rumooku Kingdom are simply acquaintances, and the sixth princess, Shistina-sama is on friendly terms with only Mia and Arisa, I haven't directly met her."
"....Satou-san sure has a lot of princess acquaintances don't you."

--Oops.

I should have excluded Noja Princess Mitia and Pink-haired Princess Menea.

"Then--Who is the foreign princess in your heart?"

I tilt my head in puzzlement after hearing Sera.
There's no mistake that she means Aze-san, but I feel that I've only told that to Lady Karina.

Then, when I look at Lady Karina who's not participating in the performance, our eyes perfectly match. Apparently, she's been watching here, but even before her eyes meet mine, she turns her face away vigorously.

Apparently, I'm now hated by Lady Karina due to the matter back then.

I change position with Sera due to the dance, so I lost sight of Lady Karina, but I saw the young noble women and men of Duchy Capital trying to talk to her for an instant.
It'd be good if she made even one friend with the chance in this evening party....

It seems Sera perceives the slight silence, she asks in a slightly stiff voice.

"--Is it, a secret?"
"No, it's nothing like a secret."

In fact, I do not intend to hide it.

"She's a High Elf called Aialize-sama."
"....High, Elf?"

Sera lifts her surprised face.
Looks like she really didn't expect that she was from another race.

"Truly?"
"Yes."

When I assented, for some reason Sera leaks out breath of relief.

--Hmm? An adolescent girl really is difficult.

As if my doubt reaches her, Sera speaks.

"In other words, Satou-san used it as a mean to escape from marriages?"
"No, it's not like that."

--Why does it become like that.

"I think Satou-san probably truly likes that High Elf, but.... A child can't be born between a human and a High Elf you know?"
"Yes, of course I'm aware of that."
"Then, I think you should carefully keep that love in your heart, and marry a girl from the same race in order to make a heir."

--Brutus, you too huh.

I can understand that looking from the sense of value of Sera and the others.
It's normal in this world to push a marriage partner whom you don't love to the head of the house.

However, right now I don't feel like conforming my marriage mindset to this world.
Even though leaving successors is a duty of any creature, there's no need for everyone to follow the rule right.

I will live for love.

I can't possibly say it since I do go to the brothels occasionally after losing from my desire though....

"If it's about heir--"

I faltered when I was going to say that I'd adopt a child.
It's possible that there would be nobles who would obstruct it if I said it ahead of time.

"You're right. I have to think about heir."
"That's right."

Sera replies with more cheerful tone compared to earlier after successfully persuaded me.

For some reason, Sera dances even closer to me than before.
I can't calm down since Sera's breasts that are bigger for her age are hitting me since a while ago.

"I'm glad that Satou-san isn't like the hero-sama in the tale."
"Hero-sama?"

I can't follow Sera who abruptly changed the topic.
How did it become hero from the flow of conversation earlier?

"Ara? Does a retainer of Earl Muno-sama not know about it? It's a tale of『The Hero of Fairy Village』, the scene where he pledges eternal love to the queen of fairy is famous."

I'll likely get along well with that hero.
When I search on the map, the book is in the royal castle's library, I'll borrow it before long.

◇

After the dance with Sera-san, I enjoyed dancing with the ladies who were waiting in line.
Of course, with the beastkin girls too.

The dances with Pochi and Tama were like street performance, but since it was received well by animal lover nobles and little ladies, I consider it a good thing.

Liza's dance was more like a combat performance, but thanks to the quick-witted band which quickly changed to speedy tune, the surrounding received it as if it was prearranged from the beginning.

After the evening party, we met with Arisa and the others who came back from the princess's tea party and we all went to Boruenan Village.
Before going to sleep, I call Arisa and Liza to talk about my real name and the matter about god-slaying.

"Arisa, Liza, can I have your time for a bit?"

"Wfhat? Are you att-tracted, worn-out, to Arisa-chan's charm?"

What do you want me be worn-out for.

"A-Arisa, don't sleep on the floor."
"I'm fai~ne, I'm not sleeping. I'm awaje. I'm not sless~ing."

Lulu lifts the sleepy Arisa who's crumbled her posture, in her arms.
It seems she really enjoyed discussing about magic with the princess, she's tottering while looking really sleepy.

"Master, Arisa seems to have fallen asleep, so I will accept any order myself."
"No, it's not really urgent, I'll talk about it tomorrow night."

Arisa would likely sulk if I talked to Liza first after all.

◇

After making sure that the children have slept, I went to Echigoya Firm.

"Kuro-sama, we've been waiting for you."

Behind the Manager, there are 10 unfamiliar young girls, and 12 young men in addition to the executives.
The room feels narrow when there are this many people.

"As I've reported to Kuro-sama. These 22 people are the slaves as additional staff that I've talked about the other day."

The slaves respectfully bow and greet me with the Manager's signal.
I took no notice of it since it's troublesome, but these slaves have good manners.

"They seem to be quite educated slaves don't they?"
"Yes, that is because they previously worked in nobles' mansions."

According to AR reading, it seems they're the former employees of the nobles who were charged of treason during the matter of the sakuramochi demon earlier.
The retainers who were nobles were executed along with their masters, so these slaves are all commoners.

"I plan to make the men work at the stores, warehouses and management in the downtown, and the women to work in the mansion."
"I'll leave that matter to the Manager."
"Certainly."

After the slaves went away, I receive the report about Shin boy's monitoring from the executives.

"He came in contact with two suspicious individuals. One of them is a black-haired boy, and

the other one is a pink-haired girl--"

Souya boy picked a quarrel with him and then princess Menea lent him a hand, like that.
It was similar to what Arisa told me before.

"Was that all?"
"Yes, if we exclude the people of the orphanage, those two were the only people who got in contact with him. However, in regard to the orphanage, the director has a bit of problem--"

According to the executive girl, in summary, despite the director accepting orphans that far exceeded the scale of the orphanage, the number of the orphan children didn't change.
There was a rumor saying that the orphans were sold to the slave traders regularly, but an investigation from the authorities found nothing suspicious, and it was concluded that the children simply occasionally escaped.

During the story, I search for the orphanage director's name.
There's nothing particularly suspicious. I thought he was connected to [Light of Liberty], but I didn't find anything like that.

Just in case, I give more orders to the executive girls.

"Investigate the orphanage director's background and people who come in contact with him."
"Yes!"
"And also, check the tracks of the escaped children. I don't mind if you increase the personnels if you're short on it."
"Yes! I understand!!"

The executive girl who looks happy even though her workload has increased must be a workaholic, no doubt.

"From tomorrow on, the auction sponsored by the kingdom will be open for three days. We will stop going to the labyrinth for the period of the auction. Squeeze the money out of the auction's participants without mercy. Do not hold back."
""""Certainly, Kuro-sama""""

I nod back to the executive girls who reply with powerful voice.
Truly reliable.

Except for the final day, entrusting the auction to these girls should be alright.

I've been working without sleep lately after all, I'll take some rest before the real thing.
I'll let the kids take some break from school, and then we should go enjoy the local dishes of the royal capital in commoner's clothings together with everyone.

Looks like I can sleep well tonight after a long time not--.

13-15. Royal Capital Sightseeing, Downtown Arc

Satou's here. For some reason [A parade group distributing fliers] that seldom appeared in the last century's manga remains in my memory. I remember the bitter memory of getting severely scolded by the student council when I tried to do the same to invite people to our circle during my college year.
Cleaning the fliers and the confetti was hard....

◇

I slept well after a long time.

The light from the morning sun peeks through the canopy's curtain.
It seems I had a really deep sleep, I haven't noticed Lulu who's opening the curtain, and the little girls who have slipped into the bed clinging to me.

....Or rather, I should have been the only one sleeping in the Royal Capital's mansion to watch over the green demon, why is everyone here?

They shouldn't have been able to teleport to the Royal Capital with Arisa's magic power, so Aze-san probably sent them.

"Good morning, Master."
"Ah, morning."

Lulu who's opening the curtain greets me with refreshing voice when she notices me waking up.

"Unyu~"
"Mowning, nanoresu."

Pochi and Tama who had woken up from the voice, rolled on my stomach, put their chins on my chest and greeted too.

"Master, good morning, so I greet."
"Good morning, Masita."
"Masita, morning."

Nana who's sleeping with Shiro and Crow on the edge of the bed greeted.
Shiro who's half asleep seems to have pulled the sleeve of Nana's shirt, the charm of Nana's pulled shirt is in full effect.

"Mwu."

Mia who's pulling my ear makes me resist the charm effect, she lets go of my ear when I turn to her.

"Morning."
"Good morning Mia. And also, Arisa--"

I hit the head of Arisa who's trying to enter my shirt.

"--You'll get no breakfast if you don't stop the sexual harassment now."
"I'm short of Masternium. Please give me replenishment."

Arisa who had woken up did a seiza in front of me and said some stupid thing.

"Tama too, short~"
"Pochi is short of Masternium too nanodesu."
"N, short."

The three youth troupe line up beside Arisa, doing seiza.

"U-um--me too, um... short of Masternium."

Lulu also timidly asked, the four of them appealed while doing seiza.
I haven't cared much for them ever since the new year, so it seems they've been lonely.

I hug everyone in turns to supply the Masternium or something, which also act as an apology.

"Mwu, unfair."
"The times were different in order of breasts' sizes."

"--It's just your imagination."

To notice the difference of comma seconds, as expected of Mithril explorers.

◇

"Good morning, Satou-sama."

Zena-san who's wearing a neat military uniform greets me in a well-mannered gesture.
The crests of Seryuu Earldom are embroidered on her uniform's chest and shoulder.

Everyone is surprised to see Zena, who was led to the living room by the butler, wearing unusual clothes.
As for me, I'm more bothered with the fact that she called me with honorific.

"Good morning, Zena-san."

Our girls who came after me greeted her unanimously.

"What's wrong with Zena-san?"

Arisa pulled my clothes, and asked close to my ear.
I tell everyone about the luncheon with Earl Seryuu while we're walking toward the dining room.

"So Earl Seryuu is an attacker~. It's like he's trying to pick a fight with Earl Muno."
"He would probably make an agreement to put priority of magic core supply for Muno territory right?"
"Ah, that might be possible. Even in Kubooku Kingdom the prime minister often grumbled that the mine refinery wouldn't work without supply of magic cores."

We arrive at the table while I'm having that conversation with Arisa.
For some reason Zena stands upright near the door looking like she wouldn't sit, so I call to her.

"Is there something wrong?"
"It is nothing, I had a breakfast at Earl Seryuu's mansion already, so I will stand guard here."

Since Earl Seryuu ordered her to act as my attendant, Zena-san replied like a soldier.
I respect her for being faithful to her mission, but to be honest it's awkward when she's this serious.

"Then let's prepare some tea for you."
"H-however..."
"It's alright. Even if a demon intrudes this room right here and now, we can counter attack while still sitting."

Back then, Liza intercepted bombardment with a meal knife after all, and the other girls don't lose to Liza in reaction speed, so it should be fine.

"Furthermore, it's hard to talk with you at this distance."
"Yes, then please excuse me."

Zena-san sits on a vacant seat, and then a maid put some tea and tea cakes in front of her.
As always, the maids here are skillful.

◇

"I'm thinking of touring the downtown today."

During the breakfast, I told them so, and everyone cheered like the sound of crackers.

"But the auction starts today, is it alright? Don't you need to prepare various things."
"Yeah, my business is only on the third day."
"I see, the male needs is on the third day after all, right."

....What are you saying Arisa?

"School~?"
"Ah! ...That's right nanodesu. There's school nodesu."
"You can take a leave."

They're only temporary students anyway, so there's no problem taking a leave for a day.

"I-is it alright nodesu?!"
"Yeah, I permit is as your guardian so it's fine."
"Wa~i"
"Nanodesu!"

Just in case, I told them that anyone still wanting to go to school could go, but there wasn't anyone who chose that.

◇

"Uwaah, what a crowd~"

After getting off the carriage, Arisa muttered while looking dumbfounded.
Today Arisa is in plain town girl clothing.

"Mwu, full."

Mia who's depressed has matching clothes with Arisa, just different colored.

"Nice smell~"
"A lot of tasty smell nanodesu."
"There's a lot of soba smell isn't it."

Tama and Pochi who are wearing shirts and culottes sniff around while closing their eyes and being carried under the arms of Liza who's wearing military uniform.

"It smells slightly savory, so it seems there are some stalls with gallete too."

The town girl fashion suits Lulu very well.
Her cuteness would have kept the flashes on until the end if she was in a cosplay show.

"Looking forward to it so I report."
"It smells nice isn't it Crow."
"Shiro, don't separate your hand from Nana-sama's, okay."
"Okay."

Nana who's in young wife clothing has her hands holding Shiro's and Crow's who are in shirts and cullottes like Pochi and Tama.

Per Arisa's suggestion, today we're all in commoner clothing.
By the way I'm wearing commoner tunic and trousers.

Only four people of Zena Squad who are accompanying us are armed, Liza only has a bronze

baton she's put on her waist, and everyone else is empty-handed.
The four people of Zena Squad are looking around at the surrounding vigilantly.

"The big building you can see beyond is the second hall of the auction you see."
"Eh~, so that's where the spoils from the floormasters are being displayed?
"No, the expensive articles are in the first hall inside the royal castle. The ones in here should be things that are displayed for commoners."

There are a little less than 1000 stalls aiming for the guests going to the auction hall in the street where we are.
The majority of the stalls are just sheets spread with junks on them, but there are also some who sell magic potions, salves, and even equipment made of monster parts.

It's truly rich of variations, I don't get tired seeing them.

"This oyaki is tasty nodesu. Pochi will share with Master a bite too nodesu."
"This katayaki is tasty too~"
"Ooh, this fake gallete is quite good."
"Dried persimmon."
"The skewers in the Royal Capital are soft aren't they. The chewiness isn't enough."
"Master, do you know the secret ingredients for the flavor of this Tsutsumi-Yaki? It seems like soy sauce, but it's slightly hot, and yet there's a faint sweet taste too."
"There is a possibility that that young organism is a lost child. I deem it fit to be protected. Master, permission to collect."

Our girls prioritize to buy and eat, they buy various snacks they carry on both their arms, striding around the crowded stalls.
Of course I rejected Nana's request.

"Vroo~?"
"It's amazing nodesu. Flame is coming out of the mouth nanodesu."

There are some people who are doing street performances between the stalls, so I throw some money for the people who amuse us.

"There's a Rabbit Rotation over there."
"Nn, heroic tale."

Rabbit Rotation is where a rabbitkin riding a horse-sized tamed rabbit monster does some techniques.
They're enclosed within fences since it'll be dangerous if the monster rampages.

"No nyoronyoro~?"
"There's no snake person nodesu."

--Snake person?

"Come to think of it, even though we saw a lot of them during our new year tour, there's

not even one now."
"The employed snakes might have been eaten by monsters during the disturbance back then, so I guess."

Nana tells her guess to Arisa who looks around wondering.

Ah, the snake charmers huh--

I tried searching on the map, but I couldn't find even one [Snake Charmer].
I wonder if they're seasonal attractions like the lion dance?

◇

Mia and Arisa seem to be tired from walking, so we find some open space to take a short break.

"Zena-san and the others too, you should get some rest."
"No, we're on duty."

--They're quite stubborn.

It's understandable though since there have been red luminous points regularly showing up on the radar.
I'd feel bad if I forcefully stop them, so I distribute cool beverages of apple water with honey to the four of them.

In addition, as soon as I find anyone who has malicious intent toward us, I seize them with always-on [Magic Hands] and throw them away to the back alley, so there's no real harm.

"Aa----------!!"

Arisa screams while also crushing the dried persimmon she got from Mia on her hand.

"Arisa. Stop shouting suddenly."
"That! Look at that."

Arisa who ignored my scolding catches my shoulder and leaps around.

--What is it?

I lower my waist and match her line of sight, she talks to me in low voice without doing any sexual harassment unusually enough.

"That gray hair! Look at that kid's title."

I see the place where Arisa points at.
As I've expected somehow, Shin boy who's working to collect garbages is there.

"Ah, didn't I tell you."

"Y-you knew? --Or rather, the title wasn't there when I met him in the school back then you know? I-is he maybe a reincarnated person?"
"His hair color should be not that if he was one right?"
"Ah, that's right. That's right isn't it."

I lightly tell Arisa who's slightly calmed about Hero Shin.
We're talking in low voice among the noisy crowd and the music from the street performers, so there's no worry of getting heard by Zena-san and her friends.

"Hm~m, a local hero who's lost his memory huh..."

After pondering while crossing her arms for a bit, Arisa asks with her violet eyes gleaming at me.

"Hey, are you going to raise that kid enough to fight demon lords?"
"No, there's already Hayato and the like, summoned heroes for that job, I'm thinking of letting Sir Julberg raise Shin boy."
"I see, he's not a girl after all~"

Arisa nods like she understands.

....No no, I didn't decide whether to raise him or not by gender you know?

◇

"Let me go--"

I picked up the voice of a little child with Attentive Ears skill just when I was feeling exhausted from Arisa's reckless remark.
Looks like the source of the scream is from the rucksack of a suspicious man who's going to disappear into the back alley.

When I move my line of sight, I see Pochi and Tama are already taking the postures to dash out.
The two's bodies are turned toward the screaming child, only their eyes are locked on to me.
Apparently, they're waiting for my order.

"Go! Pochi!"
"Yes nanodesu!"
"A~ye--"

In an instant, Pochi and Tama disappear with Flickering Movement.
The two appear in front of the man like an anime with dropped frames.

Tama who has noticed that I ordered only Pochi returns back to where she was before in an instant, politely retakes her posture to ready-to-dash position, and turns her face toward me.

"--. Tama is unneeded~?"
"Nothing like that at all."

I point my finger to another crime spot toward Tama who's looking at me with moist eyes.
There were two crime spots.

"Tama goes over there."
"Aye aye sir~, nyan"

While leaving an afterimage and cheerful voice, Tama goes to seize the other kidnapper.
I also ask Liza and Nana to go as their supports.

"E-eh? Um, just what is happening?"
"Zena-cchi, that!"

Lilio points Zena, who's confused because she can't understand the situation, at the man Pochi has arrested.
The other two of Zena squad--Miss Iona and Ruu seem to be on alert against bad people who are going to take the chance during the uproar.

"It's kidnapping. Zena-san, I'm sorry, but could you get the sentry here?"
"Y-yes--"
"I will go with Ruu. Zena-san and Lilio, please guard Viscount-sama."

After stopping Zena-san who was going to run, Miss Iona and Ruu run toward the temporary guard station in front of the stall street.

"Caught the bad guy nodesu."
"Tama too caught one~?"
"Master, I safeguarded the victim, so I report."
"I've safeguarded them too."

Pochi and Tama brought the fainted men and rolled them below my feet.
Nana and Liza brought the child victims each.

The ones saved from the rucksacks are little girls of around elementary school age who don't seem to be rich, looking at their clothes.
Both of the children have white cloth wrapped on their arms, I don't know if it's trending or something.

"Oy, you! Let go of Sina and Olna!"
"Shin-nii."
"Shin-niichan."

Looks like they're acquainted with Shin boy.
The little girls who have noticed the boy jump at Shin boy while crying.

Checking on the AR readings, I understand that the little girls are from the same orphanage

as Shin boy.

"Do you know these children?"
"Yes, that's right."

Shin boy stands before me to protect the children.

"Then I'll leave these children to you. I'm going to question these guys."
"D-did you save these kids?"
"Offucou~rse"
"That's right nanodesu."
"T-thank you. Sorry for doubting you. Oy, you too, thank them."
"Thank you for saving me."
"Thank you."

Urged by Shin boy, the children said their thanks to Pochi and Tama.

"Didn't I say not to come since the crowd is dangerous?"

I question the men while Shin boy is scolding the children who were almost kidnapped as the BGM.

"However, director-sensei said we could go."
"The director did?"
"Un, the director wrapped this white cloth to us."
"He said that it was so we could be found even if we got lost in the festival."
"That stingy director did?"

Come to think of it, the director of Shin boy orphanage was suspected of slave trading huh.

"Now then, criminal-kun. There are two things I want to ask you--"

The two aren't people of criminal guild, but the poor from the slums, so they confess easily after I threatened them slightly.

"I-it's true. We were only told to kidnap the children with white cloth wrapped on their arms."

--Guilty huh.

Looks like the orphanage director is the mastermind, or maybe he takes part in the mastermind's plan.

"They said they will give us one big copper coin if we brought the children to the man's place beyond the back alley...."

To kidnap children for such a small change--wait, it's not for the people of the slums huh.

I got a lot of easy money from the matter related to auction this time, so maybe I'll

establish a public employment office or something.
Planning the detail is annoying though, I'll leave that to the executives of Echigoya firm.
Two people will be free once the auction is over, so it's just right.

I correct my slightly astray thought, and continue questioning the men.

"Do you know the man who ordered you to do the kidnapping?"
"Yeah. I couldn't see the face since he wore black hood, but the voice was that of a young man."

Fumu, I guess this is as much as I can hear from people hired with money.

"Master, arrested the bad guys in the place this man testified, and safeguarded the young organism so I report."

Nana, holding a young boy whose arm is wrapped in yellow cloth under her arm, comes back while dragging a dirtied kidnapper.
As expected, the public attentions gather here, it's uncomfortable.

Looks like this boy belongs to a different orphanage than the Shin boy's.
Apparently, there isn't only one evil director colluding with the kidnappers.

Now then, I'll have to send invitations to the prison to those evil directors--

---

13-16. Royal Capital Sightseeing, Downtown Arc (2)

Satou's here. Anywhere you go, there are always people who turn to crime. However, to be biased against the people who are doing honest activities due to the mess caused by the few unscrupulous ones is too sad.

◇

"--The other children are also missing?!"

I heard some troubling things from Shin boy and the saved children when I was searching for the evil directors' locations.

"U-un. Pon and Chobi are gone. When everyone split to search for them, Noza and Joi went missing and then we were caught by the people earlier when we were confused."
"What should we do, Shin-nii"

Fumu, group kidnapping huh.... How nasty.

"Be at ease. We will carry out the rescue operation of the young organisms. Master, the permission!"

Nana is unusually fired up.

"That's right! Our Master will find the kidnappers and rescue the children like a walk in the park!"
"Don't make fun of me just because I'm a kid! How do you search for them in this crowd!"

Shin boy snaps hearing Arisa's rash promise. Looks like he'll become emotional when he's pressed.
The little girls who became anxious hearing his exasperation burst into tears, then Pochi, Tama, and Lulu hurriedly try to calm them down.

Now then, let's get the situation under control--.

I search for people that belong to the orphanage on the map.

Looks like they're confined in a workshop in the same area.
It seems they're with other children from other orphanages.

There are several dozens of crime guild people, one slave trader, and level 20 and 30 man and woman who seem to be the bodyguards.
The man has [Berserker] title and [Frenzy] skill, a bit dangerous.

I question the man Nana caught who was acting as a relay, and get information about the workshop's location.
I've already known but it's a necessary action.

"--Like I said, it'll be fine."
"We'll do it ourselves. We'll find them even if we have to walk until we're utterly exhausted."

I put myself between Arisa and Shin boy who are quarreling even now.

"Leave it at that. I've heard the place where the children are held from this man."
"W-where is it!"

Shin boy is looking like he'll run.
His action is truly like a hero, but his level isn't enough to act in solo.

"It's dangerous to go alone. Let's go together--"

I hold back Shin boy and suggest to him that we should go with him.

"Leave the criminals to us, I'd like to entrust the children rescue to you, is it fine?"
"Y-yeah. As long as I can save the children, I'm fine with it."
"Alright, that's that then. Arisa, Lulu, and Mia, you three please protect these children. Once the guards have come, hand over the kidnappers and tell them about the situation."
"Okkey."

I leave it to Arisa who readily consents, and then we head toward the workshop with Shin boy.
I'll put aside the prison invitation of the evil directors for later.

◇

"Is it an abandoned workshop?"
"Looks like it--"

We arrive at the workshop which has been closed off with thick woods on the entrance with no sign of humans.
While answering Liza, I looked around and found the workshop signboard, which made me realize the reason why this workshop was abandoned.

"Look at that. It's the crest of the Earl house which was destroyed because of the crime of treason."

In other words, this place was used by people related to the [Light of Liberty].
The kidnappers inside are probably carrying out the plan that the [Mirage] had ordered them when he was alive.

The street in front of the workshop is deserted, it seems the inhabitants have gone to the festival around the auction venue.

If it's like this, no one will report to the authorities even if some suspicious men going in and out of the workshop.

"Tama, go infiltrate and look for the place they keep the children."
"Aye aye sir~"

Tama disappears with my instruction.
Shin boy and Zena-san are surprised, but let's ignore them for now.

After waiting a bit under the shadow of the workshop, Tama comes back passing over the fences with 'nyurun' voice.

"Found them~?"
"Fast"
"No way"

Shin boy and Lilio leak out voice of surprise to see Tama who completed her duty in under a minute.
Zena-san is too surprised no voice comes out her.

I've told Tama about the underground employee lodging where the children are held beforehand though, so this result is reasonable.

"I'll leave it to Shin to rescue the children. Pochi and Tama, please guard him."
"Roger~"
"Yes nanodesu."

Nana and Zena-san show disapproval to my instruction.

"Master, permission to accompany the rescue mission."
"There might be other children inside the workshop, so I want Nana to protect them."
"--Taking charge of Master's order."

Nana nods and then pulls back.

"Um, is it fine to let only the children go?"
"It's alright. However, that's right--Lilio-san, would you please accompany the children?"
"Understood. Take care of Zena-cchi 'kay."
"Yes, I won't let even a scratch on her."

Lilio waves her hand energetically to Zena-san whose cheeks are dyed red besides me, and then she trails behind Shin boy.
The four of them cross over the workshop wall, infiltrating it.

"Shiro and Crow, go the top of that tree to see if there's anyone trying to escape. Could you tell me using flash Light Magic if there's anything happen?"
"Un."
"It's 'yes'. Shiro."

"Yes."

Shiro and Crow fly to the top of the tree.

Now then, let's do it.

◇

"--Who the heck are ya? Ya knew this is place belongs to Earl-sama and yet entered?"

The moment we went into the workshop, three crime guild men approached us while threatening.

"Are you people under Earl-sama?"
"Huuh? Something like that doesn't matter! Leave those women and ya kid go away. Ah, you can bring that lizard home with ya."

Zena-san's ears could be polluted from the men's vulgar speech.

"Liza--"
"Understood."

Liza attacks on with my signal.
She doesn't have her favorite spear, but against these small fries, such thing won't be a handicap.

With a single swing of Liza's tail who's closed in fast, the men get mowed down like decayed trees.
Seemingly hearing that sound, the door in the back opens and around 10 tough-looking men come out.

"Tch, I thought they were the guards."
"Looks like they're strong."
"Then, leave it to the two bodyguards--"

I don't intend to keep them company for long, so let's get this over with quickly.
I silently order Liza and Nana.

Liza rushes out like a low-altitude arrow, peerlessly beating down the men.
Nana runs on the space that Liza's created, sends the men who stand on her way flying with magic shield using Force Arte, and rushes into the door.
I can't see it from here, but it seems she knocks down the slave trader inside and saves the children.

The mercenary man who has Berserker title is attacking Liza repeatedly while screaming like a beast.
The other female mercenary is more cool-headed, she tries to attack whenever there's a gap on Liza's defense while using the other men as shields.

They're quite contrast--

"....■■《Wind Protection》"

Zena-san's magic flicked the poisonous dagger that flew out of nowhere.
Looks like it was thrown by the boss.

"Tch, they even brought a magician huh. You guys, seize that black-haired kid!"
""""Yea""""

With the signal from the boss, three men are coming to assault me all at once.

"■■ Wind Fan"

Zena-san's magic obstructs the men's visions with dust, and then she cuts down the men quick like the wind.
She's relatively merciless, but it doesn't seem the men are killed.

She can't compare to our girls, but her strength doesn't pale in comparison to an average holy knight.
Even though they're crime guild people, against hooligans like them, this result is natural.

I saw the shadow of a man who seemed to be the boss trying to hide.
I grab the boss's feet with [Magic Hand] and throw him in front of Liza who's finished dealing with the mercenaries.

"Uwah, what? Is it magic--gueeh"

Stabbed by Liza's baton, the boss faints in agony.
It looks really painful.

Nana came back from the door just when we were finished.

"Master, secured three young organisms."
"Well done. I'll look after those children, so go with Liza to look for any survivors after we tie these guys."
"Yes, Master."

I know there isn't anyone left in this workshop, but I can't not do anything in front of Zena-san.

"Zena-san, let's evacuate the children for the time being."
"Yes."

With Zena-san, I go outside the workshop while bringing the children.

"Who are you onii-chan?"
"Will you bring me back to the orphanage?"
"I'm hungry."

While giving candies to the little girls, I check their skills.
Apparently, they were managed separately because they had magic-type gifts.
They were most likely were going to get slave-contracted ahead of time.

◇

When we get to the workshop's courtyard, the children who were confined in the cellar come out, led by Shin boy.

"Deliverance~?"
"Rescue complete nanodesu."
"You two did well."

I catch the two who are reporting mission complete in my arms and pat their heads.
I instruct Shiro and Crow who came back from the treetop to go to where Arisa and the others are and to bring the guards.

Now then, time to question the boss.
I order Liza to pour water to his head to rouse him up.

"Buwaah--, tch. Pathetic, everyone's captured huh."
"Answer my questions."
"Tch, bring the hero if you want to make me talk."

This boss seems to have the habit of clicking tongue.

"Are you the one who ordered people to kidnap children with cloth wrapped on their arm."

The boss stops talking when I question him.
Let's bluff here.

"Your silence is already an answer. The other guys have already confessed you see? What I want to hear from you is his location."
"Hmph, I won't sell out Mirage-aniki even if you tear apart this body. Don't lump me together with other small fries."

....So this guy is really connected to Mirage too.

I've thought of this before, but Interrogation skill is dangerously effective.
Afterwards, I questioned him many things, and he confessed that he had been regularly gathered orphans and broke people of the slums and given them to the earl's agent.

The gathered people were probably the countless corpses that were in the earl mansion's underground cave.
The boss isn't directly acquainted with the evil directors, but they were in touch through the direct subordinates of Mirage.

It seems they had been ordered to gather the sacrifices every odd months whenever the

auction open since a year ago.
The last one was several days before the incident of the year-end.

I also confirmed the thing about the Orbs, but his replies were are all irrelevant.
Apparently, these guys aren't related to the Orb matter.

Fumu, then there's a high possibility that they're unrelated to the green demon's secret plot.

I've heard the thing I wanted to hear from the boss, so I separate from everyone with nature's call as an excuse.
Just in case, I told Liza that I was going to capture the other criminals.

◇

I change to Kuro, and move to boarding place for stagecoaches in the royal capital's eastern gate using Unit Arrangement.

"Are you traveling?"
"What do you want!"

I catch the shoulder of the orphanage director who's carrying a big bag and talk.

"Eey, let go! Do you not know courtesy!"

The orphanage director struggles to shake off my hand.

It seems he's trying to escape the royal capital by riding the stagecoach.
He probably sensed the danger for himself from Echigoya's inquiry.

He has some good intuition.

"Do you know Mirage?"
"W-what is it about? Talk to other people if you're mistaken me with someone. I'm in a hurry."

Fumu, he doesn't seem to be playing dumb, so the evil director doesn't seem to be related to Mirage.

"--Then what about the 'arm cloth'?"
With that, the evil director shakes in surprise, and tries to run off to the stagecoaches while pushing the other passengers.
Looks like he takes part in the kidnapping case.

I catch his shoulder when he's about to get on the stagecoach, and hurl him behind.
With a crashing sound, gold coins flows out of his bag.

"Orphanage director nowadays seem to be quite well off."

While glancing at that, I scowl at the evil director.

"O, oy, it's gold coins."
"Woow"

The masses are starting to make noise when they see the gold coins, but no one tries to steal it, maybe because there's a guard station nearby.

"Oy! What are you doing in front of the gate."
"Guards, arrest this guy."

I show the dagger with Mitsukuni crest to the guards and order them.
The dagger was a thing I got as Nanashi.

There are three evil directors including this one. The other two are arrested in their orphanages.

After questioning the third evil director, I push them and the kidnapper boss to the prime minister secret agent bureau.
Zena-san and the guards were panicking when I snatched the boss as Kuro, but since I've told Liza and the others that Kuro's identity is me, there should be no problem.

After a slightly long nature's call, I returned to where everyone was.

As for the treatment of the evil directors and co--

According to the prime minister, as they took part in the summoning of the greater demon that put the royal capital in danger, they are all charged of treason to be put for capital punishment.

◇

"So, did you question the orphanage directors?"
"Yeah, they were just in for the money. They were acquainted with the earl in question after he donated to the orphanages."

In order to have a secret talk, I put Arisa on my shoulders and parade around the auction venue.
I let the guards to handle the orphans. I gave the guard leader one gold coin as a bonus, so they must have sent the children back to the orphanages properly.

"However, to be thanked by a defiant handsome boy in quite murmur sure fires you up~"

She's probably talking about the curt thank you of Shin boy when we parted.
It's hard for me to agree with Arisa's remark, but it's not like I can't understand if I were to put myself in a cheeky girl's shoes.

'Kyururuu', I heard a sound from Zena-san's stomach.
Having Attentive Ears skill, I'm probably the only one who heard it.

Unlike our girls who have been buying and eating, the four people of Zena squad haven't eaten anything since morning, they must be hungry.

It's already way past 2 PM when I check on the clock.
Looks like we missed lunch due to the kidnapping incident.

"I'm feeling hungry. Let's get some lunch on a shop somewhere."
"Yes! Yes! I know a good shop! Arisa-chan recommends it!"

Arisa reacted to my suggestion first.
There wasn't particular shop I wanted to go, so we went to the so-called creative cuisine shop Arisa recommended.

It was slightly far, so we took a carriage.
It's near the knight school of the royal academy--or rather, it's close by the Echigoya Firm's workshop.

It seems to be the Soba shop that Nell had a meal at back then.

"Here it is!"

Arisa points to a two-story building restaurant while looking proud.

"The gyuudonburi here is delicious nodesu!"
"Like gyuu gyuu~ it's packed with deliciousness~?"

Looks like Pochi and Tama too have come here to eat with their classmates after school and between-meal snacks.

"It smells nice of meat."
"Aren't the smell of soy sauce and miso stronger?"

Lulu and Liza seem hungry too, they're sensitive to the smell.

◇

"Occha~n! Is the back private room available?"
"Ou, if it isn't the noble young lady. Sorry, but the back room's been reserved."

The thirty-something old shopkeeper who has thick body hair comes out of the kitchen.
There are only several people by the counter inside the store, so all the eight tables inside are empty.

"Eh~, how unusual."
"Sorry for being unusual. All the tables are available, so you can sit wherever you like."
"Ho~i"

We secure three six-people tables inside and sit down.
Zena-san and her squad are in the table close to the entrance since they act as the

bodyguards.

"What do you like to order?"
"Do you have any recommendation?"

As to be expected of this country's literacy rate, there's no menu in this shop.

"Of course gyuudonburi nanodesu!"
"Mwu, kakiage."

I was actually asking the shopkeeper, but Pochi and Mia quickly told me their own recommendation.

"If you're fine with something a bit expensive, I recommend Oumi cow karage special."
"Then I'll go with that. How about everyone?"

Looks like karage (fried food) have begun to spread in the royal capital.
I urge everyone to order.

"Viscount-sama's treat?"
"W-wait Lilio!"

Zena-san is panicking to Lilio's unreserved remark.

"Of course. You can order anything you like without minding the price. Just in case though, liquor is prohibited okay."
"Alright, as expected of noble-sama!"
"Then I want the most expensive dish!"
"W-wait Ruu!"
"Ruu, let's have some talk later."

Zena-san and Miss Iona raise their eyebrows to Ruu's remark.

"Oy oy, our most expensive dish is two silver coins y'know?"
"I don't mind. Everyone, order without hesitation!"
"Pochi is gyuudonburi nanodesu."
"Tama gyuudonburi too~"
"I'd like Oumi cow karage special like Master's please."
"Kakiage special."

After Pochi, Tama, Lulu and Mia, everyone tells their order to the shopkeeper.
He sure can memorize well without memo.

Lastly, Arisa who was pondering with a serious face speaks her order.

"I'll go with gyuudon set, kakiage, and cold tofu with a lot of spring onions."

Arisa--I can hear the wailing call of diet y'know?

13-17. Royal Capital Sightseeing, Downtown Arc (3)

Satou's here. I remember my superior insisting, "People only see what they want to see" while we were drinking together. I replied randomly and ignored it at that time when I was drunk, but it might be unexpectedly deep.

◇

The Japanese food in the creative cuisine shop turned out not bad taste-wise despite looking bad.

The fried food looking strangely black is probably because they rarely ever change the oil.
It's fine once a while but eating here everyday would make your cholesterol raised to dangerous level.

When we've eaten for awhile, some new guests appear from the shop's entrance.

"Oy, Yui. Is this outskirt eatery really good?"
"U~n, I don't know if it's good, but it's popular you see."

The one who entered first was a plump black-haired boy.
He's handsome enough to pass as an idol if he were slimmer. Rather, he looks like a character from some 2D otome game.

And, the girl who's linking arms with the boy is an acquaintance--the self-proclaimed idol of Southern Japan Union who was summoned by Princess Menea's kingdom, Yui Akasaki.

According to AR, the black-haired boy beside her seems to be Souya boy, the rumored highness of the school.
I was thinking of meeting him sooner or later in order to see if he's the [Highness] that the [Light of Liberty] referred, so this is convenient.
I had confirmed his skill and title without problem using Map search, but I wanted to meet the person directly to ascertain things.

"Ah! Isn't it Satou-san and Arisa!"
"Long time no see~"

Arisa waves back at Yui who's waving her hands while looking so happy.

That expression of Yui gets clouded.

"What's wrong Satou-san, you're wearing poor-looking clothes! Don't tell me, your business failed?"

Looks like she misunderstood seeing our clothes.

"Are they Yui's acquaintances?"
"Y-yes."
"If you don't have any work, you can help in our house. You don't seem to have the strength, but if you were a merchant before, then you should be able to do accountant works. We'll also give enough food for the beastkin and the children over there to at least live on if they do odd jobs."

He's quite cheeky, but this Souya boy seems to be unexpectedly the type who takes good care of others.
I had a prejudice since Arisa said that he was bullying someone weaker, but he might just be a common good guy.

Arisa and the others are putting difficult faces, so it's about time to stop his unilateral performance.

"I am thankful for your kindness, but our jobs are already sufficient--"

Let alone 24, I'm already working 28 hours even now, so there is no need to add more works.

"What, you're Yui's acquaintances. No need to be reserved."
"We're only traveling incognito today. Look at this, see."

Arisa takes the silver noble tag, and the mithril explorer plate from my chest.

"What is it? Silver--Vi-viscount?!"

Souya boy screams with an aghast face when he sees the tag.
There's no way he'd have though that an upper noble would go to a cheap restaurant in commoner clothing after all.

"I'm sorry. I wasn't trying to make fun of you, I couldn't seize the right timing to speak."

I introduce myself to him since I feel like I've done something bad.

"Nice to meet you, I'm Viscount Satou Pendragon. May I ask your name?"
"So-Souya. I cannot tell you my family name due to circumstances. Please forgive me for that."

In case of Shiga Kingdom, if an illegitimate child like him referred himself as Souya Shiga, he would be hauled to the prison with illness as a pretext and be disposed of.
Yui interrupts with a friendly face between us.

"I'm sorry Satou-san. My darling acts bossy around everyone, but he's not a bad guy so please forgive him."
"I don't feel offended. To offer works just because they're your acquaintances of your girlfriend is not something anyone would do just like that."
"Ehehe~, he's not my boyfriend, he's my fiance~"

Come to think of it, I heard such a thing from Aoi boy.
At that time I thought, "He must be a lolicon to fall in love with a 13 year old girl", but if the guy is a 14 year old himself, it's nothing questionable.

Yui covers her mouth bashfully.
A ring fitted with a small diamond glitters on that hand.

"Uwah, stop showing off your ring plainly."
"Ehehehe, isn't nice~ Darling made this for me."

--Hou?

The crafting quality is shoddy, but it's quite a stylish ring.
Although you can't possibly sell it to nobles or wealthy merchants, but it's good enough to be sold in stores.

"I had an opportunity to see a Mich-aelangelo-made pendant. I was just imitating that."

Come to think of it I remember creating many kind of pendants using [Michaelangelo] name.
Souya boy's pronunciation was slightly strange, but there's no need to point that out.

"Do you want to become a jewel craftsman in the future?"
"...I do not. I (ore), no, I (watashi) have to aim for the position of supremacy. That is my mother's...."

Souya boy spoke painfully but lost his power to continue in the latter half. The only one who heard the part after [watashi] was probably me with my Attentive Ears skill.
Looks like he's burdened with various things as well.
I don't have any intention of sticking my neck out for him though, so let' just watch over lukewarmly.

When I was at a lost as to how to change the subject, another carriage stopped in front of the shop.
It's a gaudy carriage that lower nobles like to ride in.

A sharp-eyed man wearing coachman clothing enters the shop and then looks around the shop interior as if evaluating it.
It seems he thought there was no problem with it, he went back to call the noble waiting outside the shop.

The pink hair swings like spreading flower scent, a beautiful girl treads upon the shop with light steps.
Her white dress covers to her ankles, her boots are peeking from the hem.
Even though her attire looks like something that doesn't fit the TPO, it seems she's aware that she was going to the downtown.

"Hee, so this is the shop with Japanese food."

"Yes, it'll be nice if it suits Aoi's palate."

A boy who looks like a girl entering afterward looks around the shop restlessly with great interest. He is a researcher of my Echigoya Firm, another summoned person like Yui earlier--Land of Prosperous Japan Empire's Aoi Haruka.

The pink princess noblewoman--Princess Menea's pink eyes seem to have finally caught me, she approaches me half-running happily.

"My, Satou-sama!"
"It has been a long time. Princess Menea."

It seem the other children around can't catch up with the sudden appearance of Menea.

"My, please call me Menea."

Princess Menea wraps my hand at a strange distance, and pushes herself.
If this were a manga, I feel like her eyes would turn heart-shaped.

Arisa and Mia would declare me guilty if this kept up, so I gently separate myself from her.

"--Me-Menea. It's been awhile."

The one who replied her instead of me was Souya boy.
Seems he has some feeling for princess Menea, he looks like the template of a boy in love.

Yui looks like she doesn't find it amusing, but it doesn't seem like she'll reprove Souya boy.

"I do not remember allowing you to call me without honorific. I will not object this one out of respect for Satou-sama, but it'll be dealt with appropriately the next time you do it."

--Scary.

Princess Menea rejects Souya boy with an expression that makes her look like a completely different person than the one I know.
Souya boy nods in agreement while trembling and looking pale.

Princess Menea has a good look but her personality is problematic, so I'd like for Souya boy to live with Yui's pure love.

◇

We were going to leave after finishing our meal, but since Princess Menea wanted us to listen to Aoi boy's worry together with her, we went into the restaurant's private room with them.
I'm surrounded by Yui, Souya boy, and Arisa so that Princess Menea won't get close.

"I wonder what I should do...."

Aoi stares at the table and mutters.

"Hey, so what are you worrying about anyway?"
"If you're being bullied by your senpai in Echigoya Firm, shall I go and stop them?"

Arisa and Yui looked at Aoi boy's face and talked.
We've been eating the sweets on top of the table, so it's about time for some serious flavor.

"It's not like that. The manager told me to bring a new idea for invention the day after tomorrow, but I can't think of anything good."
"There should be many for that though?"

Arisa tilts her head in puzzlement.
Apparently, Aoi boy is the type who thinks too deeply.

"That's right! Aoi, make smartphones, smartphones. One that works with magic!"
"Please don't be absurd. I've been told not to make smartphones or telecommunication devices. Also, cars and railroads are not allowed either."
"Why?"
"Long distance telecommunication and mass transportation violate the god's taboo, so I can't do it, said Kuro-sama."
"Eh~, gods are stingy~"

Arisa doesn't join the two's conversation, and puts herself on top of my lap as if constraining Princess Menea who's gone around the table to try to sit besides me.

Arisa--don't stroke someone's thigh casually.

"Do cars include golem carriages too?"
"You might not understand, but it's about cars that work with internal combustion engines and burning oil."
"I see. It'll be dangerous if they explode after all."
"...Y-yes."

While stopping Arisa's sexual harassment, I replied like a native would.

"Hey, what about pump?"
"By pump, do you mean the thing that pulls water?"
"Yes, that."

Arisa is probably talking about pumps that work with human-power.
People use buckets to draw water from wells in Shiga Kingdom, so just having pumps should save quite some labor.

I thought it was quite a good idea, but Aoi boy shakes his head.

"That's not good. Royal Capital has water service...."

Just as Aoi boy's said, the Royal Capital is fully equipped with water and sewer services.

However--.

"It's not like you have to sell it in the Royal Capital."
"Right right. There's no waterworks besides in the Royal Capital, so I think it'll sell explosively well."

Just as Yui and Arisa have said, it should be useful in rural areas.
It's strange that it hasn't been spread by reincarnated people and the others, but it really shouldn't violate the god's taboo.

"--Is it really so?"
"How about presenting that if it seems good?"
"You've got nothing to lose anyway."

Encouraged by Yui and Arisa, Aoi boy seems to be getting motivated too.

"Invention huh.... Aoi or something, you come from the same hometown as Yui right?"

Seemingly like having thought of something, Souya boy talked to Aoi boy.

"Y-yes--wait, you talked about it, Yui-chan."
"Un, sorry. I didn't want to keep any secret to darling."

Aoi boy pressed on Yui who betrayed his secret, but Yui lightly apologized. Her face looks like she doesn't feel bad about it.

"Souya-san, if possible, could you please keep our origins a secret--"
"I know. I don't want to let Yui becomes something like an experimental animal."

Souya boy flatly asserted so, thus Aoi boy leaks out a sigh of relief.

"Now then, getting back on the topic, since you come from the same place, you should know about magical dishes that can be eaten immediately after pouring hot water into it, the『Insutan』or something? How about making that? You should have no problem regarding the market if you have some connection with the military."
"In-stant ramen or bouillon cube, something like them is it.... Making dried noodles and powdered soup seem doable. I'll try doing a presentation about that to the manager!"

He's quite good at looking at things.
I'll scout Souya boy to Echigoya firm if he becomes a bump.

I'll add some information while at it.

"I remember seeing dried noodles in Standell city in Oyugock Dukedom. It should be helpful if you order it right?"
"Thank you very much, Satou-san. I'll ask about it once I go back!"

I'm glad that Aoi boy becomes energetic again.

◇

"It's thanks to Satou-san that Aoi got well! What should I give as a thank."
"No no, I didn't do anything."

Princess Menea approached me while looking impressed, but I really only gave a reference in the end, and actually not did anything. I think the three people besides me are the meritorious ones.

"That's not the case at all! That's right! Will you come for the hanami (sakura blossom viewing)? You can see the royal capital's sakura tree from the girl's dormitory garden well."

Yui gets on Princess Menea's suggestion outright.

"Hanami huh~, that sounds nice! Menea-sama, could I go too with darling?"
"....I-it can't be helped. If Yui insists, then I will allow--"
"I dislike Sakura. I won't go. Yui should go if you want."

Princess Menea seems like she's going to give in to Yui's cheerful request, but Souya refuses with heavy atmosphere.

"--Darling? Wait for me. Let's go together if you're going back. I'm sorry, Menea-sama. Let's do the hanami for later."

Yui hurriedly chases after Souya boy who heads toward the exit.

"Princess Menea.... Do not get close to the white-haired orphan anymore. He's--eerie somehow."

Before going through the exit, Souya boy left a warning that also sounded like a backbiting.

◇

During the hanami with Princess Menea, the girls from the girl's dormitory intruded when they found Mia, so it became quite a chaotic party.
Even though there were no liquor, the tension felt like they'd start stripping, I couldn't follow, so we excused myself by saying that we needed to prepare for the evening party.

"Everyone should go to the evening party ahead of time once you've prepared, I'll be going after finishing my business at Echigoya Firm."
"He? We'll wait."

I told that to Arisa who stopped her hand changing clothes while having a curious expression on her face.

"I'd like you to see Karina-sama's condition before the evening party."
"Okay then, but it's rare for you to worry about Karina-sama."

I think it's not that strange for someone to worry about his employer's daughter.
Lady Karina may get the opportunity to make some friends at that place, so I want Arisa and the others to remove her timidness.

If she were with me, we would get surrounded by nobles who brought marriage proposals, it'd cut down the time.

"Then I'll leave it to you."
"Okkey~"

I wave my hands, going to leave the room, but stop.

"That's right Arisa. I have something to talk about after the evening party, so don't get too frolic to the point of running out of battery like yesterday."
"Is it perhaps, YO･TO･GI?"

While feeling slightly uneasy toward Arisa who raised a shout of victory like 'Hyaho~i', I leave for Echigoya Firm.

13-18. Satou and Kuro

Satou's here. I've heard that, "You'll die if you meet your doppelganger", though I don't know the source. Is it because you get the urge to kill it when you see yourself objectively?

◇

"Kuro-sama, welcome back."

Even though I moved into the main office without any sound, Tifaliza greets me in no time at all, and then she pushes the button to call the manager.
Sound of footsteps, 'dadada', that aren't fit for a lady are reverberating from the corridor.

The footsteps stop right before the door, and then someone knocks the door after enough time for a few deep breathes.

"Enter."
"Please excuse me."

There wasn't any trace of going full throttle at the corridor on the manager who opened the door.

"Kuro-sama, besides the matter about the auction, there is a report regarding the boy and the orphanage from before. Which shall I report first?"
"Start from the auction."

The latter is probably about the encounter with us during the day, so leaving it for later should be fine.

"Yes, all of the magic arms that were exhibited in the first day have all been bid as planned. Furthermore, nobles, military officers, and merchants who couldn't bid have made reservations. Total income from the successful bid is--"
"It's 30.713 gold coins. The details is in this copy."

Tifaliza's calm and melodius voice takes over the manager's triumphant report.

"We've got quite a lot for only 100 exhibited items."
"The effect from the incident where demons and monsters appeared in the Royal Capital was quite impactful. I heard that magic arms that were exhibited by other people had also been sold for three times the price."

....I see.

I guess it's not improbable for the sudden price hike since the red-rope pattern monsters can't be hurt by normal weapons that haven't been enchanted at least.

"Fumu, check the applicants levels, and prioritize the ones who are level 30 and above and

have magic edge skills."

Giving magic swords to people with 1-digit level is meaningless after all.

"Certainly. And also, a special request for a magic sword has come from Sir Heim of Shiga Eight Swords."
"A made-to-order magic sword huh..."

It sounds quite interesting.
After getting the chant orb, making a one-of-a-kind magic sword without burdening Arisa and Mia sounds fun too.

"I can't do it right now, but inform him that we will consider about it positively."
"--Yes, understood."

Looks like she didn't think that I would receive it, the manager's response was slightly delayed.
The manager pulls herself together, rolls up the list on her hand and then continues talking.

"The prime minister requested that we don't sell magic arms to merchants who deal with foreign countries. This is the list of them."

I receive the list from the manager.
The house of Souya boy I met today is in that list. It's no wonder that they're in the list since it seems they have dealings with the weaselkin empire and the continent west.

The prime minister probably sent the sales control request because he wanted to prevent powerful weapons getting to foreign countries.

"It should be natural for us to think about the national defense."
"Then we will handle it as is. Kuro-sama, I'm thinking of asking for tax concession from the prime minister for undertaking the request, would you permit it?"
"Do it."

The manager is shrewd unlike me.

◇

Next, I receive the report about Shin boy.

"--Thus, the kidnapped orphans were saved by Viscount Pendragon and his Mithril explorer retainers. May I ask if the orphanage directors were really arrested by Kuro-sama?"

I reply, "It's the truth", to the manager.

"Then I'll omit the matter about the orphanage directors. The details are described in this report, Kuro-sama can look at it on later time."

I take the report from the manager and toss it into the black hole of the item box.

"The majority of the missing children were found in the slum."
"Is that so--"

--Good.

It seems not all of the missing children were sacrificed for the demon summoning.

"The watchmen reported that social welfare bureau had dispatched junior officers to the orphanages that had lost their directors."

I thought the replacements for the directors wouldn't come for a while, but the public office worked unexpectedly fast.

"Lastly, Shin boy has sold his black bandana to a weaselkin merchant."
"When was it?"
"It was right before the kidnapping incident."

I didn't notice it at that time, so he wasn't wearing the recognition inhibition bandana huh.
That explains Arisa finding out Shin boy's hero title.

Even if I give Shin boy another recognition inhibition item, he will just sell it again if he doesn't understand its importance.
I'll talk to him about the reason properly before giving it next time.

"Who is that merchant?"
"I am very sorry. It's not described in the report."
"Then investigate it, just the name is fine."
"Understood. I'll arrange it so that it'll be ready by tomorrow morning."

I had searched for the bandana on the map, but I couldn't find it. It's probably stored inside Item Box.
I tried searching the weaselkin, but there were more than 1000 of them in the Royal Capital, so I gave up.
Being annoying was one of the reason, but there was simply no information to narrow them down.

"Kuro-sama, you might be not interested in it, but--"

With that preface, the manager talked about how thieves appeared in two venues of the auctions.
They were all amateur thieves, so all of them seemed to have been arrested by the venue guards and soldiers, but the story continues.

"--The goddess statue has disappeared?"
"Yes, the inside of the box that had been carried into the venue was changed into another stone statue."

Fumu, it's probably unrelated to the matter about orbs, but it kinda bothers me.

"It's bothering me a bit. Inquire the detail about the incident."
"Certainly."

Next, I received report about the decrease of burglary of the merchant houses in the Royal Capital.

"That's pleasing to hear and all but...."

I feel puzzled inside my mind since I don't know how it relates to me.

"This is the result of Kuro-sama's actions."

Did I do anything?

"Thanks to Kuro-sama smashing thief hideouts one after another, the number of thieves in the metropolitan area and night burglars have decreased sharply."

Come to think of it, I remember arresting around 400 people recently.

"Excellent."

I replied so and urged the manager for the next report.

◇

"Kuro-sama, there is a little something I need to talk about Sir Pendragon--"

After finishing the report, the manager wanted to consult with a serious face, so we change places from Kuro's office where Tifaliza is working to the manager's room.

"What is it about?"

Don't tell me, has she realized that Kuro and Satou are the same person?

"Y-yes. Actually the main head of the earl house that's related to me--"
"Manager, this is bad!"

The manager was finally going to talk, but then a light blond executive girl rushed in so it got interrupted.

"Viscount Pendragon has come for a meeting!"

--What?

"Moreover, he said that he was Manager's fiance!"

I suppress my surprise with [Poker Face] skill, and search the map in order to find out the identity of the fake Sir Pendragon.

◇

"Nice to meet you, fiancee-dono. I want to talk with just the two of us without other people interfering if possible. Sorry but could you please leave?"

That guy talked while having the exact face of Satou.
Unfortunately the voice is slightly different from my natural voice. It sounds like he's forcing higher pitched voice to sound lower.

I confirmed just in case, but he's not a mock body (avatar) of the green demon.

"--Don't mind it."

I cut off Fake Satou's talk.

"And, what's your business for coming here?"

Fake Satou shrugs off his shoulders to my pressing, he's putting the expression of 'can't be helped then'.
His attitude is quite aggravating, though it's probably his aim.

"I received her marriage proposal, so I thought of meeting her here and having some talk with her. We're neighbors after all."

Fake Satou smiles refreshingly towards the manager.
The manager isn't looking at Fake Satou, but to me, she tells me the reason why he's insisting that he's her fiance.

"A-actually, the head of an earl house related to ours had colluded with my father to propose a marriage to Viscount Pendragon."

I see, so it was among the many marriage proposals that had arrived in the mansion.

I had told the butler to write letters of refusal if the other parties were lower nobles, but I have to write the letters myself if it's for the upper nobles, so it's been put on hold.
It looks like it'll become troublesome if I don't write my replies soon.

Now then, leaving that aside, let's find out Fake Satou's motive.

"Apparently an annoying bug won't go away today, so let's deepen our love in another day."

The manager lifts her eyebrows in anger toward Fake Satou's joke.
She muttered in low voice, "He dared to insult Kuro-sama."

However, it seems because the other party is an upper noble, she endures herself not to raise her hands against him.

"This is a commemoration for our meeting."

Fake Satou takes out a necklace wrapped in cloth from his chest and presents it to the manager.

It's an expensive looking necklace that has a glittering vermilion drop on the top.

The detailed information is displayed beside the necklace on the AR reading--

"I want you to at least take this."

The manager who wants Fake Satou to go away is going to take the necklace without even looking at it.
I grab her arm and stop her.

"....Wait."
"Kuro-sama?"

The manager smiles broadly from my restraint.

"You are really boorish--"

Fake Satou disappeared before he finished speaking.

He didn't run away, he was sunk into the wall after receiving my front kick.
I didn't kill him of course, but he probably won't wake up for now.

I leave the surprised manager and put the necklace dropped by him into my storage.
This necklace is a cursed item, it's a dangerous item that makes the wearer unconsciously obeys the order of the one who has the other pair.

"Ku-Kuro-sama?! He's still tentatively an upper noble. From the standpoint of Kuro-sama and Hero Nanashi-sama...."
"I don't care. It's an impostor."

Long blond hair flows down from Fake Satou's black hair.
I get close to the impostor and strip off his disguise.

"--A woman?"
"That's right."

This person was the female phantom thief whom I met when we first arrived at the Royal Capital.

I had noticed that the Fake Satou was the phantom thief from the beginning, but she didn't do any offense, so I assumed a wait-and-see stance.

I tied the phantom thief with Thorn Foot's ivy, gave her the minimum treatment with a diluted low magic potion, and interrogated her.

"--Then you wanted to manipulate the manager in order to steal the orbs in the underground vault?"
"That's right."

This one wanted orbs too huh--.

Organized thievery has decreased, but now an individual phantom thief has appeared.
I'm getting tired of eliminating them, it's about the time they should stop.

"Is that all you want to ask? Then just quickly hand me over to the guards. Or maybe you want my body?"

The female phantom thief pushes out her breasts while being tied up, provoking me.
It's the manager who reacts instead of me.

"Be silent."

The manager hits the phantom thief with a horseback-riding whip.
A red mark is engraved on the phantom thief's cheek.

"Leave it at that."

I take out a sleeping magic potion from my storage and force the female phantom thief to drink it.
The female phantom thief twists her body, trying to resist it, but she quickly loses her consciousness, turning to [Coma] condition.

She was probably going to try escaping before the imprisonment, but now she should sleep for a whole day.

"Send her to the prison as she wants--"

As if waiting for me to finish dealing with the fake, the ring tone from [Telephone] rings.

The caller is Arisa.
Did anything happen in the royal castle?

While recalling a slight irritation, I put the Telephone reception to ON.

13-19. Nanashi and Arisa

Arisa

"Arisa, you sure look quite cheerful today."
"You think so?"

Dehehe, I understand myself that my face has broken into a smile.
I don't think something wonderful like Yotogi will happen probably, but getting called out by your loved one in the middle of the night sure fires you up.

If I don't stop myself from getting another three helping in the feast today, were I strip and show my bulging stomach, my maiden's heart will be in a pinch.
Ah but, the dishes in the royal castle are different than what Lulu and Master usually make, so I just can't stop~

--PYWEEEE！

I heard a high-pitched voice when the carriage was just about to arrive at the royal castle's parking lot.

"Chicken meat~?"
"Bird of prey nanodesu."

Bird of prey? Is it like a hawk or an eagle?

"--Coachman! Stop the carriage!"

Liza who's looking outside speaks loudly.

I wonder what is it?

Time for magic!

[Area Search] activate!

Above is--.

◇

"Arisa, pull yourself together."

Liza is slapping my cheeks.
In the grove of trees--the carriage is overturned on the thicket.

Apparently, I fainted.

"W-what happened?"

"The horses acted violently and overturned the carriage."

The horses did--?

"--Right! I remember now!"

Right when I was shouting, I heard the call from Tama and Pochi.
It seems they've gone scouting.

"Lots of carriages fell~"
"It'll be bad if we don't save them quick nanodesu."

That thing flies over the grove of trees like, 'gouu'.

--PYWEEEE！

Beyond the grove, I see many carriages toppled over and something circling in the sky.

Eagle as its upper half of the body, and lion as the lower half.

The mythical beast that rules over the sky--Griffon.

Anyone who sees that figure can only choose to escape.

--PYWEEEE！

However, I'll say this daringly!

"Griffon's cry should be『Guruu』!!!"
"Arisa--what are you saying?"

Liza is looking seriously worried about me.
I'm sorry. I know that it's not a good timing to make the joke, but I couldn't help but did it no matter what.

I wonder if being an otaku is sinful....

"But, how did that monster invade the royal castle?"

I suddenly realized it when I heard Lulu.

Come to think of it, the royal castle has the barrier of Ancient King Yamato, so it was even safe during the attack of a greater demon back then, how did this one enter I wonder?

"Huhuh~?"
"It's Master nanodesu!"

Eh? Where?

"■■■■　■■ Long Sight. That clothing and violet wig is certainly Master's, so I report."

I also take out a telescope from my magic bag, and look at the back of the circling Griffon.

I see a small figure of a person on its back.
If that figure is really Master, then the Griffon seems to be around 10 meter long big body in total.

"But, I don't think Master would do something that trouble people you know?"
"Nn, agree."

Just as Lulu and Mia have said, this is unlike Master.

--Moreover.

"Everyone, get ready for battle!"

Everyone looks surprised hearing my command.

"A-Arisa?"
"That's an impostor!"

I mean the chest area is swelled.
Master who hates cross-dressing will never cross-dresses by himself.

"For now, let's attract their attention. I'll confine them in my space magic once they come here!"
"Understood. Pochi, Tama, use Magic Edge Cannon. Lulu, guard Mia and Arisa. Nana, provide the counterattack."

Everyone starts to act following Liza's instructions.

◇

Red balls of light shot by the three fly toward the Griffon.
However, right before they hit, the shots missed the Griffon as if they evaded it themselves.

"--Wind barrier."

I hear Mia muttering next to me.

However, we should have succeeded tempting it going to the grove.
I mean the Griffon's hostile line of sight is directed here.

The Griffon plunges toward us at a terrific speed!
I look up at the Griffon and shout.

"Only barrier can win against barrier!"

That ain't the case, but the mood is important!

The tension MAX me can do it!
Without unique skill, there's no way this can be resisted!

--Activating space magic's [<<Dimension Labyrinth>>]!

The space before the Griffon swirls, swallowing its big body.
They tried to evade in a hurry, but their speed became their undoing, they disappeared into the the other dimension created by my magic.

"As expected of Arisa."
"Not yet! Three minutes. I'm going to call for reinforcement, so everyone please help the injured people in the parking lot!"

After I told so, everyone began to act immediately.

I take out the continuous MP-healing magic potion, that Master's created, from magic bag and drink it.
I still have enough magic power, but it's to be doubly sure.

Next I activate space magic's [Telephone], calling Master.

◇

『Yes, it's Satou here.』
"Master, it's an emergency. Come here."

I frankly report.

"What's happened?"

As expected of cheat Master, to come at the next moment, he's too wonderf--mu?

"Wait, don't come with that figure."
"Ah, sorry--"

Master is not in his usual black haired shota-like figure, but in Echigoya Firm's Kuro figure with a foreign actor's face and white hair.
It might be handsome and all, but I like his usual face more than the camouflage mask.

After confirming that no one is looking, Master changes back to the usual Satou figure.

"And, what happened?"
"An impostor of Master and a Griffon appeared."
"What? Here too?"

Master expressed his surprise.

"Eh? Did a Griffon come out too there?"
"No, it was a fake Satou in my case."

So, such a wonderful object appeared.
I want to see it a bit.

"So, where's the impostor and the Griffon?"
"They're there."

We ran out of time-out before I could explain.
The sky broke, and a beak appeared.

"Then, I'll go ahead and eliminate--"

After declaring so reliably, Master won't move for some reason.

"--That idiot."

Master who's unusually angry changed into Nanashi form, disappeared, and reappeared beside the Griffon.

They're saying something in the distant, but I can't hear it here.

Next moment, the Griffon disappeared together with Master.

....I wonder what happened?

Explanation pulisu!

13-20. Nanashi and Arisa (2)

Arisa

"Sorry, sorry, an idiot rode on the Griffon, so I had to take them someplace away that wouldn't trouble other people."
"Idiot?"

It's rare for Master who's a gentleman to speak like that.

--I wonder what is this? I feel a really bad premonition.

Then, Liza who should have been doing rescue comes back.

Looks like she's been called by Master's Telephone magic.
Unlike me, Master can use Telephone without speaking. It's plainly cheating, enviable.

"Master, did you call for me."
"Yeah, I want Liza and Arisa to come with me."
"Certainly."
"Okkey."

The scene before my eyes changes into jungle like frame drops in a movie.
There's a Griffon laying on the space before us, grooming itself.

"Hikaru! Where are you?"

Whuat?! A woman's name!!

Th-theis is a case!
The case is happening on the spot, nee-san!

"Ah! Ichirou-nii."

--Another alias?
You might forget your true name before long you know?

Mumu! The black-haired woman who took off her wig lightly runs toward Master.

--That's!

Isn't she the broom woman who barged on when the greater demon attacked!

The broom woman rushes, going to hug Master vigorously, so I put myself between them using short-distance teleport.

"Too soft!"

"Uwah, Teleport magic? Huh aren't you the violet-haired girl. Then maybe it's a Unique Skill?"

The broom woman were surprised against Arisa-chan's impregnable guard.

"You two calm down."

As I intimidatingly growled, 'garuru', Master embraced me.
I don't intend to yield to the broom woman, but in order to fully enjoy this wonderful situation, I decide to stop my hostility outwardly.

◇

"First, she is my childhood friend who comes from the same town, her alias is Hikaru, her real name is Kouhai Mitsuko, she's the Ancient King Yamato herself. It seems she underwent cold sleep with magical means until the present age. She usually calls herself Mito."

There are many things I want to retort, but I'll endure it for now.

I mean, I'm currently experiencing a miracle right now.
For Master to hold me on his lap while patting my head!

Ah, it'll be nice if time stop like this--

"Then, she's Liza of Lizardfolk kin. She's a master of spears and the mediator among my companions."

Introduced by Master, Liza bows to the broom woman.
Liza's eyes are on alert against the broom woman and the Griffon, her hand is not letting go of her spear. As expected of Liza.

"Nice to meet you! You don't have to be so vigilant, I won't harm Ichirou-nii you see."

While turning aside Liza's spirit with ease, the broom woman waves her hand carefreely.

"And, this one is Arisa. As you can see, she's a reincarnated person, and although she's a bit troublesome, she's my advisor."

A-at least call me your lover or your future wife please!

"Don't tell me, there are other girls too?"
"There are though?"

Even though the broom woman asked anxiously, Master replied back utterly normally.
Apparently, the broom woman--nay, Hikaru's position is close to ours.

"Master, a question!"
"What is it so suddenly."
"Is this Hikaru person your ex-girlfriend? Or an ex-wife?"

I asked since I thought the possibility of 'YES' was low, but it might be better if I didn't ask. My heart is beating like it'll explode.

"There's no way right? I've never gone out with Hikaru. Of course, she's never been my wife either."
"I see~♪"

Alright---------!

Indeed my Master!

"Ichirou-nii is mean. I'm planning to be your wife from now on so it's alright! I mean, I'm not a younger girl now! I'm older than Ichirou-nii! Fufufu, no more lolita! Another world is the best! Now you can't tell me that you're not into younger girls!"

Uwah, her personality somehow feels like a deja vu.

"I've been thinking this since awhile, Arisa's and Hikaru's personalities are similar aren't they. "

S-T-O-P iiiit!

I did think I was fickle, but I don't think I'm that bad.

◇

"And, is the name Ichirou that Hikaru-san has been saying since awhile ago Master's new alias?"
"No that's my real name."
"Real name?"

--Ah, I see.

Satou can't be a real name after all.

"So Master's name was Satou Ichirou."
"Nope. My real name is Suzuki Ichirou."

WHY？

"Where did Satou come from Suzuki Ichirouuuu!"

Master ignores my soulful retort.
I think Master's ignoring talent is too high.

"Should I call Master as Suzuki Ichirou-sama from now on?"
"No, just call me Satou like it's always been."

Master replied so to Liza's question.

I and Liza have never called Master with Satou even once, but let's not tease it needlessly now.

Arisa-chan is a woman who can read mood.

"My default name has been Satou ever since I came here, so being called Satou in this figure has become natural for me."

I see, so it wasn't a name that was added later.

"And, what did this childhood friend Hikaru-san come for?"
"I was asked to do something by Ichirou-nii."

Hikaru answers with a smile.
It looks like she's really in love with Master. I can't help but feel that she's happy to be relied on.

"I asked her to be Shin boy's guard since it seems he's being targeted by a greater demon."
"Ah, that hero kid huh."

I'm not happy that Master relied on this Hikaru instead of us, but complaining about it will be misdirected of me.
It's vexing, but we are no match against a greater demon unless we are all together with our equipment and in fully boosted states.

We have to become stronger, and be relied upon the most!
I'll work hard to aim for level 100 once we get back to the Labyrinth City!

"Right, why were you dressed up as Hero Nanashi?"
"Nn? Because I've succeeded as the second generation Hero Nanashi. I've been told that I won't be attacked even if I ride a dragon if I'm in this clothing."

It bothered me for a bit so I asked, and such an answer came back.
Certainly, I think no one attacked her with arrows or magic, only us did attack.

"But I never thought that the horses would run away earlier than the humans when the Griffon appeared."
"Griffon is the natural enemy of horses in fantasy setting after all."

It's said that Hippogriff is born between a horse and a Griffon isn't it?
Come to think of it, I might have never heard the name Hippogriff in this world.

"You have to apologize to the people you troubled later okay."
"Which reminds me, why did you ride a Griffon?"
"The dragons wouldn't let me ride on them since they were afraid of Ichirou-nii, so I asked the Griffon who was playing in the mountain foot to let me ride on it."

Saying so, Hikaru-cchi release her hidden status and plainly showed her Unique Skill,

[Friendship].
Won't you become the greatest tamer with this skill?

"But you shouldn't have ridden it to as far as the royal castle."
"Well~, I noticed that I didn't have Ichirou-nii's contact address when I arrived at the Royal Capital, so I thought, might as well see Sharlick-kun's descendants at the royal castle."

Hikaru frankly told me her reason when I gave her my honest opinion.
Judging from the flow of the conversation, Sharlick doesn't seem to be about the current third prince, but probably about the second generation Shiga Kingdom's king.

Your own descendants, that super fire you up!

◇

And also, right.
I have to ask one more thing.

"I missed my chance to ask earlier, what do you mean by second generation Nanashi?"
"Ah, since Hikaru can probably defeat a demon lord even if it appears, and the king and the prime minister think Nanashi as the Ancient King Yamato, Hikaru is the right person for it right?"

So it's like that?
How should I say, aren't you pushing the troublesome work to Hikaru-cchi?

Leaving me who had such a doubt behind, Master said something serious.

"Oh right, I've been wanting to talk about something for awhile--"

--WHAT？

I, can't, hear, it.

"To the dragons?"
"That's right. I'm sorry to Liza who's from the clan that worships dragons...."
"No, dragons seek powerful opponents. I heard that the dragons commend anyone who can hurt them by any means. Besides--"

I-can't-hear-it.

"Are you alright?"

Master looked at me, whose thought was in disarray, worryingly
Long eyelashes. His skin is disgustingly beautiful like always.

"S-sorry, I couldn't hear it well. It's about how Master defeated the dragons at the Dragon Valley and leveled up right? I did wonder how Master got to level 310, but to think that the experience points was from defeating dragons. As expected of my Master!"

I talk like a machine gun to escape reality.

Yet, this Hikaru girl!

"Isn't it~. To even defeat the strongest dragon god AkonKagura-sama, can't believe it~ As expected of my Ichirou-nii!"

She plainly thrust the reality, she didn't even doubt or try to escape.

--God slaying?

I could believe it if it was a half, demi-god, or the god's apostle.

"Arisa, I understand that you can't believe it."

No! You don't understand!

"But that's not an excuse to open my robe on the chest and try to enter inside!"

--Isn't it fine, just for a bit!

◇

"Have you calmed down?"
"Un, a bit."

My Masternium is being replenished.
Please wait for a bit more.

"Since Arisa has calmed down, let's get back to the Royal Capital. Hikaru, you change to normal clothing too."
"Un, okay. Guri-kun we're parting here. Really thank you for today."

--PYWEEEE!

I won't retort.
I won't retort anymore!

"And also Hikaru, just call me Satou."
"Then please call me Mito."
"Okay."
"But, can I call you Ichirou-nii when it's just us two?"
"Yeah, I don't mind."

Nuoooooou!

"Please call me Hikaru during that time too."
"Yeah."

Flirting is forbidden!

I desperately drill my head on Master's stomach.

"Now then, since Arisa is in bad mood, so let's go back."

We return to the royal castle with Master's Unique Skill.

The people seem to be in the middle of rescue operation, so we go help too.
Despite being the daughter of a noble, Karina is pulling the carriages together with Pochi and Tama, rescuing the injured.

It's a pity that my instruction for her to attract Master's attention isn't going well.
I wonder if I really should instruct Karina to be the tsundere type after all?

◇

In the end, the evening party today is canceled too.

After seeing the young nobles who were supposed to debut on the high society this year crying their eyes out, Hikaru--I mean, Mito secretly apologizes and prays for them to meet their good matches.
Well, the person herself is single without a lover, so you can't expect it to be miraculous.

"--And so, Mito is my childhood friend. She's going to live in the mansion for a while, so please get along well with her."
"Nice to meet you!"

Master introduced Mito to everyone, Mito unabashedly greeted.

After discussing with Liza, we're going to tell about Master's real name in Japan, and about the god slaying to everyone once we find a good opportunity.
For me and Liza, 'Satou' feels more like Master's real name than 'Suzuki Ichirou'.

"Nice to meet you~?"
"Nice to meet you nanodesu."
"Registered as Master's sister-in-law so I report."

Tama, Pochi, and Nana welcomed Mito.

"Mwu, increased."
"P-please take care of me."

Mia and Lulu seem to have mixed feelings due to the appearance of a rival.

"Mito knows that I'm a hero, so you can show her your magic bags and the hidden equipment."

When Master finished speaking, the entrance bell rang.

"--Looks like Zena-san has come."

Master who turned his face toward the entrance muttered.

"Zena? Don't tell me it's another new girl?"
"Yes, it's the girl who's saved Liza and the others, and works as a magic soldier in Seryuu city."

Should I say that the concerned party is in love with Master?
Well, I guess it's fine.

There's a lot besides Zena-tan anyway.

Zena-tan who entered the room is surprised to see Mito.
However, the meaning of that surprise is slightly different from what I expected.

"Mi-Mito-san?!"
"Ara, aren't you the child I met in Zetsu Earldom?"

Looks like Zena-tan and Mito are acquainted.

The world is small~

The two were asking about their common acquaintance, John-kun, but I didn't really care so I ignored it.

After hearing that Mito is Master's childhood friend, Zena-tan is having a complicated look on her face, but Mito looks like she's used to it.
It seems Master really was popular with younger girls in his former world too.

But, well, I'm not that pessimistic to the status quo.

I mean, unlike the monogamous Japan, the countries here approve the polygamy law.
Moreover, Master is an upper noble, so he should be able to have three wives at the very least!

Even if I have to yield the first seat to Aze-tan, I'll get the second and the third seats together with Lulu!

If I just smash Master's strangely high ethics, I should be able to be considered a wife candidate!
My highest priority is to build a bombshell body!

Now then, I'll get the secret of Lulu onee-sama who's stealthily attained C-cup, and get that nice body!

Oh but, tomorrow is the princess's tea party, so I have to sleep quick.

Alright, let's work hard from tomorrow on!

13-21. The Princess's Tea Party

Satou's here. Even someone who's usually taciturn can talk fluently when it's about their favorite thing. If you want to get along with someone who's hard to please, I think you should begin by knowing their favorite thing.

◇

"Thank you for inviting me to the tea party today--"

I bow like a retainer would before Princess Shistina, the sixth princess of Shiga Kingdom.

The ones that have come to the tea party are only Arisa, Mia and me.

The three beastkin girl and Nana have gone to the labyrinth. They wished for it since they hadn't moved their bodies for awhile, so I sent them to the marine area deep in the first layer. Of course, Lulu who brought cooking tools were also with them.
In addition, Crow and Shiro are attending the royal academy like usual, and Hikaru is watching Shin boy.

I finish my greeting, and look around the room while being careful as to not make it seems rude.

As might be expected of the room of the princess of a large kingdom, eight lady's attendants and maids are packed inside.
Every one of the employees is a beauty.

"Welcome Viscount Pendragon. Arisa and Mia-sama too, welcome."
"Good day Shistina-sama. I have brought the snacks I talked about the other day. It has been put inside the magic refrigerator storage, so please go ahead and enjoy it."
"Morning."

Arisa was talking about crepes.
It was topped with strawberry and lulu's fruit ice cream, so I ended up making a magic refrigerator for it too. I made it in the name of one of my alias, Trismegistus.

This is the first time I've been invited to a tea party by the princess, so I've brought some presents that's just right coming from a Viscount.

Adding up the princess's preferences I heard from Arisa, I brought things like stationery with flower fragrance, self-made paper that felt nice to write on, a pen made from water stone that didn't need ink, and a box with lock for putting letters.
Every one of them is adorned with pretty decorations that suit the princess, made in the name of Michaelangelo. They were quite good considering they were made in half an hour.

In addition I also gave six-colored paper tags. They're Arisa's and Mia's favorites, so a researcher should be happy with them.

I also gave things like pastry and perfumes to the personal attendants of the princess.
They've been taking care of Arisa and Mia, so these much is alright.

"This is the first time I've seen such a small refrigerator. Perhaps, Viscount Pendragon made it?"

The princess asked with eyes full of expectation, but I can't exactly tell her YES.

"No, it's a work of Trismegistus-shi."
"That's the name of the up-and-coming mysterious magic tool engineer isn't it. If I'm not mistaken he's contracted exclusively to Echigoya Firm."
"The princess knows well, it was brought by my personal merchant. It is quite useful when I need to bring cakes."

After hearing my conversation with the princess, one of the princess's attendant looked subtly dejected.
A small-sized magic refrigerator is convenient after all, so she probably wanted to have one nearby.
Unlike the pen and the letter box that use the user's magic power, magic refrigerator uses a crimson treasure manufactured from a philosopher's stone as its magic source, so I can't give it.

Beckoned by the princess, we sit on the sofa and then her personal musicians begin to play a soft elegant tune.
Mia seemed to be interested with the musicians, but she sat besides me with a thump after Arisa urged her to.

When the princess touches the crystal pillar-like magic tool beside the sofa, wind begins to circulate around us and the musicians' performance can't be heard anymore.

"I've used the anti-listening device, so you can talk with ease."
"Thank you, Tina-sama."
"Nn."
"You too Viscount Pendragon, please relax more."

The princess's way of speaking changed.

I see, so it's a free and easy party.
Looks like Arisa and Mia are good friends with Princess Shistina.

Apparently, even the special music is nothing more than a way to check the magic tool's function.

"And so, Viscount Pendragon--"
"You can call me with just Satou."

My house name is a bit hard to say, so I tell her to use the easier one.

For some reason, Mia and Arisa who are sitting beside me are grinding my arms and rubbing their heads, but they stop acting strangely after I slip my arm away and pat their heads.

"Then Sir Satou. Could you please tell me about the firework and the <<Firework Illusion>> that you made in Oyugock Dukedom?"
"Yes, it's fine. At first I asked about the firework that was made from gunpowder from Hero Hayato--"

The Deception skill was doing great after a long absence, so I succeeded telling a fabricated story about the making of the firework spell without any trouble--

--Or so it should have been....

"Then! Satou-sama really made the firework!"

The princess links her fingers in front of her chest looking so happy, staring at me with a gaze full of admiration

....Oops.
Maybe I should have told her that I found it in ancient document from Ancient King Yamato's era and recreated it.

No, it's widely known that the firework is my creation in the Duchy Capital, so telling a lie would get it exposed.

"Nn, genius."

Mia nods.

Afterward, we had a break when the maids brought the snacks and the tea, and then the four of us discussed about magic lively.

She stated her knowledge about magic and spells so fluently I'd have never thought she was the same taciturn person like when she was in the Forbidden Library, she was debating with Arisa and Mia about magic.

It's been two hours already, but their liveliness don't seem to be fading.
They look like Akiba warriors when they talk about anime and games they like.

◇

I hesitated as to whether I should show the spell that was requested through Arisa or not, but thinking that the princess probably won't use it for anything strange, I take out the document about the spell I've brought.
Even if I got caught in something annoying because of this, I could probably do something about it through Nanashi.

"This is, don't tell me!"

"I had found some right spell, so I altered it a bit and made it so that it fulfills the request."

I pour water on the silver tray and then pour it with thick colored fruit juice.
After stirring it with a wooden stir stick, I ask Mia to use the spell.

"■■■■ ■ ■ ■■ ■■■ Remove Different Water"

The mixed fluid on the tray is gradually separating.
Eventually, the water is on the left side, and the concentration of fruit juice is gathered on the right side. They'll mix again if left alone, but this should be enough for the spell experiment.

I don't know what she want to use this for, but this might be useful for cooking and such.

"Amazing! Satou-sama, you're amazing!"

The excited princess holds my hands on the table.
Rather, she's been adding "sama" to call my name since awhile ago.

"The color is a bit different than the original fruit juice isn't it."
"Nn, condensed."

Arisa and Mia fold their arms while criticizing the magic's effect.

I've also made other spells, one that uses space magic and another that uses lightning magic, but the former has become an advanced level magic because it over-consume the capacity to pick up the molecules, while the latter makes use of the ionization tendency so it doesn't meet the requirement of separating the fruit juice.

In the end, the water magic that makes use of osmotic pressure has the best cost to performance ratio.

"Your highness, what do you plan to use this spell for?"
"--Can you promise not to laugh at me?"

The princess replied seriously to my nonchalant question.

"Yes, of course."

I replied immediately, but the princess seems to be hesitating about something.

"It's alright, Master won't laugh at people who are earnest."
"Nn, no problem."

Arisa and Mia back the princess when they see her like that.
It seems the princess makes up her mind with that, she resolves herself and speaks.

"I'm researching the method to return monsters into normal creatures."

The princess began to talk with such a shocking statement.

"Do you know that monsters are born from the concentration of miasma?"
"Yes, I do."
"Ever since I heard about it as a child, I've had this question,『If miasma turns creatures into monsters, can't the reverse happen too?』--"

I did think about that too.

In every book I've read up until know, they've concluded that the process is irreversible, but I've been thinking even now that it should be possible to turn back monsters back with magic.
In fact, humans that had began to change into monsters after consuming Fiend Drug did stop their transformation when their magic power were extracted.

At the very least, I think that if it's immediately after the transformation, they can turn back to the original creatures by pulling out the miasma inside their bodies.

There is a darkness magic that can control miasma and create monster, so I think it's possible if I get that spell.
I didn't see it in the Forbidden Library of Shiga Kingdom, I think asking True Ancestor Ban or the knowledgeable Corpse in the Labyrinth's lower layer might be worth it.

It seems the princess is researching separation magic like this in order to link it with her [Turning monsters back into normal creatures] research.

"--I think that if the miasma in monsters can be pulled out, turning them back into normal creatures, the living space of people will open up more, and then even the people in the downtown will be able to live prosperously."

I agreed with the princess until the halfway through, but I couldn't really agree with the last part.
If people become the ruler of the world, great wars between people are sure to happen.

Moreover, if the monsters are created by the gods to become the deterrence of war, then I can't help but feel that making them disappear would mean violating the gods' taboo.

Furthermore, even if you can turn a monster back into a normal creature, I don't think you will be able to make the monsters in the whole world disappear.
Rather, if you want to enlarge living space, researching monster-repellent barrier should net you better result.

"That's a splendid way of thinking."

Nevertheless, I read the mood, and affirmed the princess's noble desire.
I agree to the first half at least.

Also, it'd be troubling if strangely denying her would make the princess progressing to some

distorted way.
If there's no one who sympathizes with with her, I'm worried that a remnant of the [Wings of Liberty] would take advantage of her, making her support the demon's plot after getting tricked.

"I'm glad--"

After hearing my impression, the princess muttered and relaxed her shoulders.
So she really was afraid that her view would be denied.

"I think materializing it would be difficult, but the result of the research would be left for the future. Continuing the research while keeping the hope that it'll blossom someday is alright."
"Yes! Satou-sama!"

In an indirect way, I had told her, "It might be useless, but your research might be useful for someone in the future", but it seems her heartstrings have been touched, the princess is staring at me with gleaming eyes.

For some reason, Arisa and Mia are glaring.
The stares of the maids beyond the anti-listening device are piercing.

Well now, what's up with this place....

●Characters

【Shistina】
The sixth princess of Shiga Kingdom. 18 year old. Allowed to go in and out of the royal castle's forbidden library. Her mother is the daughter of Duke Bishtal. A friend of Arisa and Mia.

【Shin】
A good-looking boy with white hair that Arisa met in the Royal Academy. He seems to be a local hero.

【Trismegistus】
One of Satou's aliases. Used when making magic potions and magic tools.

【Michaelangelo】
One of Satou's aliases. Used when making artworks and accessories.

【Ban】
A reincarnated person who was formerly a Japanese. A vampire True Ancestor who takes up a residence in the lower layer of Selbira's underground labyrinth.

【Corpse】
A reincarnated person who was formerly a Japanese. A mummy military otaku man who takes up a residence in the lower layer of Selbira's underground labyrinth. Once a scientist of Furu empire. Once threatened the gods using nuclear weapons.

【Hayato】
Saga Empire's hero who was summoned from Japan. Currently chasing after a demon lord in the labyrinth of the weaselkin empire.

【Akiba Warrior】
Veteran volunteer. Possible to job-change into a wizard when they exceed 30 year old. Devoted to do habitual image training in order to prepare for when they get teleported to another world.

13-22. The Princess's Tea Party (2)

Satou's here. I've seen harps in stories and tv shows, but I've never seen one in person. I have an image of a woman wearing toga playing a harp, but that's quite heavy isn't it.

◇

I'm saved by the announcement that the little sister of Princess Shistina will come.
Stopping the anti-listening device, we clean up the spell documents and get back to a normal tea party state.
While feeling a bit like a secret lover of a married woman somehow, my eyes catch sight of a little girl who appears on the entrance of the room.

"Shistina nee-sama!"

The small princess hugs Princess Shistina.
Her name is Doris, born from the same mother as Princess Shistina, she's the twelfth princess who's only 10 years old. She's two years younger than Arisa, but her physique is no different than Arisa's.

Princess Doris is behaving like a spoiled child with her big sister for a while, after that she turns toward Mia and speaks in high tension.

"Mia-sama! I've brought an unusual harp and Hisui today for Mia-sama!"

The 'Hisui' that Princess Doris was talking about isn't a jade but a small songbird with feathers as beautiful as a jade[1].

It's singing beautifully from inside a luxurious cage.

--I wonder what is this? I get deja vu like I know this bird.

"Mia-sama, please play this!"

Mia receives the harp, flicks the strings with her finger and confirms the music scale.
The harp looks mystical befitting to be an item of a princess of a large kingdom.

The strings that look like they're made from gold are arranged on the harp's jade-like main body.

In addition, a relief of a long haired woman is carved on its supporting part.
This female statue doesn't seem to be a mere decoration but it also serves as an echo pipe, Mia is doing trial and error with a serious face, trying to grasp the harp's characteristic.

Looks like Princess Doris is bored now that Mia isn't keeping her company, she steps toward

me.

"I permit you to give your name."

Princess Doris spoke so as if commanding me who was still sitting.
The way she's trying her best to look dignified is heartwarming.

"Nice to meet you your highness. I am Viscount Satou Pendragon, a retainer of Earl Muno."

After that, I bow stylishly like a young nobleman would.
Normally I would only do this to a lady, but this kind of greeting should make a little girl who's trying hard to look like an adult happy.

"My! What a wonderful greeting, Sir Pendragyon--Viscount-sama. I am the twelfth princess of Shiga Kingdom, Doris Shiga. I'm born from the same mother as Shistina nee-sama's nano--desuwa."

Princess Doris returned the greeting even while fumbling her words and using wrong speech.
After looking restlessly to my sides, she turns toward Arisa.

"Arisa, leave that space."
"No way."

Arisa rudely refused the order even though it was against a princess of a large kingdom.
It seems the princess didn't think that she would be refused, her line of sight loiters around restlessly.

Mia is sitting on the opposite side of Arisa.
After looking troubled for a while, seemingly unable to tell Mia to leave, she smiles as if she's realized something and then she holds both her hands toward me.

--What does she want me to do?

"Let me sit on your lap, Pendra--Satou."

I see, she wants to sit on my lap huh.

"Doris, you're being impolite."
"Princess, sit beside Princess Shistina."

Princess Shistina and Princess Doris's close aide rebuked her, but she turns her clingy-like line of sight toward me.

"--I can't?"
"Understood, Princess Doris."

I grab her waist and put her on my lap.
Mia and Arisa seem dissatisfied, but please let me off for just spoiling a cute child.

◇

After Mia has finished adjusting the strings, she begins playing the harp.
It seems the jade colored bird likes Mia's performance, it's chirping with the music.

--Un? I can feel wave of magic power.

According to information from AR reading, the crystal tree which the harp is made from has an effect on the emotion of the audiences.
Simply put, the item has an extra effect of making the listeners get more easily impressed.

In fact, the people here, besides me who've resisted it, are listening to Mia's performance in ecstasy.
By no means it's because my sensitivity has been gotten bad.

Well, it doesn't seem like it causes any harm anyway, I'll just listen to Mia's performance quietly--.

Right at that time, I heard a bird's shriek, and then sound of metal bursting echoes in the room.
It's followed by the servants' screams, throwing the room into chaos.

Before my view, there's a monster spreading its wing on top of a broken cage.

An emeral green colored bird-type monster opens its bright red eyes.
Red-rope pattern magic circle is emerging from the surface of its jewel-like feathers.

--A red rope monster?

"Hisui's cage!"
"M-monster!"
"Y-your highness, please evacuate!"

I throw the three little girls to the corner of the room, and carry Princess Shistina to that corner.

"Your highnesssssssss!"

I feel sorry for the maids who look like they'll faint, but I only have two arms.

I put down Princess Shistina to the falling point of the three little girls, and receive the coming little girls one by one.
I think Arisa is a big shot for trying to aim for my lips in this situation.

I felt that the presence of the monster trying to act when I was receiving Arisa, so I kicked one of the heavy sofas toward the monster.

"Mwu."
"Why is a red rope pattern in this place?"

"Let's defeat it for now."

Mia's and Arisa's questions are reasonable, but there are too many non-combatants here.
Removing the monster quickly is probably for the best.

"You can't! Don't kill Hisui!"

When I was going to eliminate the monster, Princess Doris stops me with her whole body.
So that's really what remain of Princess Doris's songbird.

"I'm sorry your highness."

I apologize to the small Princess Doris and rush toward the monster.
Unfortunately, I lack preparation.

--KYURYEEEEEEE.

I block the bird's ultrasonic breath with [Air Curtain] magic chantlessly, and hit the monster's body with my palm.

"HISUIIIIII!"

Princess Doris's desperate scream is beating my back.

--I'm reflecting.

Even if it's unreasonable, I shouldn't give up easily.

Having nothing to lose in trying, I rob the monster's magic power with [Mana Drain] through my palm.
The red rope magic circle that protects the monster's body disappears.

So far it's just as planned, I'll leave it to luck from here on.

I search the magic core inside the mosnter's body with map search.
It's really not possible huh....

--Wait, perhaps!

I consciously use the [Magic Essence Distribution Perception] that I've learned recently.

--Alright!

I can perceive the distribution of magic essence inside the monster's body.

It seems the magic sense is thick around the blood vessel and the body surface.
The thickest one among them is probably the magic core.

I pierce the monster's body with my arm and pull out the magic core inside.

However, my intuition tells me that doing only this much is the same as just killing the monster.

Then what should I do next?
Maybe I should remove the magic essence flowing in its body?

I execute that thinking.
If I can tear magic barrier with my hand, then I should be able to grasp magic essence too.

I grasp the magic essence together with the blood that's coming out from the wound opened from taking the magic core, and then carefully pull it out like pulling a root from the ground.

I feel like several hours have passed, but it's probably only a few seconds in reality.
I pulled around 70% of the magic essence from the monster's body.

The monster's body is shrunk, turning back into a bird.

"Hisui!"
"Princess, you can't."
"No! Let go!"

--However, the damage is probably to heavy for a small bird to withstand.

The songbird's fire of life is disappearing.

I confirm the stock of magic potions in my storage.
Low-grade medicines are out of question. I think mid-grade medicine should be able to do it, but I don't have the conviction that it'll succeed.
Let's be careful here and use the best one.

I take out a small bottle of upper-grade magic potion from the storage.
It's been mixed with my blood so I can't use it to other people, but there shouldn't be anyone complaining if it's for a bird.

I sprinkle the magic potion on the songbird's wound, and put the rest into its small beak.

--Pi, pi, pu, piru, piru, pipirururuu.

The agonizing voice from the bird gradually turns energetic.

"Hisui! Thank god!"

As expected of upper-grade magic potion.
The effect is outstanding even though it's been mixed with my blood!

"A m-monster got... turned back into the original creature?"

I feel slightly guilty when I hear the feverish voice of Princess Shistina, but since this ended

without Princess Doris having some strange trauma, I guess you can call this excellent.

Now then, what kind of excuse should I use.

"Your highness, the medicine that I used just now was called Nectar, an item that was found in the lowest floor of a certain labyrinth--"

Do your best [Deception] skill.
Tomorrow's peace depends on you!

●Characters
【Doris】
The twelfth princess of Shiga Kingdom. 10 years old. Born from the same mother as Princess Shistina's.
Her pet appeared at a glimpse in [12-18. Tea Party's Intruder].

1. Hisui=jade

13-23. Outcome of the Tea Party

Satou's here. Anyone can fail. I think the real question is if you can recover from that failure.

◇

After telling Shistina that Nectar is an item that can't be obtained anymore, I tell her to keep it a secret to prevent some ugly contests for it.

In addition, she was probably unstable since Hisui turning back into a bird had just happened, so she accepted the made-up story easily.
I show her an extravagant knuckle duster that I've made from Orichalcum as a joke, telling that it's a magic weapon for dispersing magic power, adding the credibility to the made-up story.

I felt it was not enough with just that, so I cited a famous book as a reference for the basis of canceling monster-fication as another fabricated story.

"--Or so it's written in the ancient document."
"Satou-sama is really knowledgeable."

Princess Shistina is nodding to anything I said with heartmarks on her eyes like Princess Menea, maybe because I had actually materialized her goal before her eyes.

Princess Shistina's first lady's maid seems to notice the irregularity of the situation, but it seems she's going to respect her master's wish, she doesn't question me at all.

Most of the aides were crouching in the corner of the room while closing their eyes during the monster's rampage earlier, so the only people who saw the spectacle earlier were these two, the little Princess Doris, and her wet nurse.

"Hisuii. Thank godd."
"Doris, thank Satou-sama too."
"Yes, onee-sama. Thank you, Satou."
"You're welcome."

Princess Doris is focused to the fact that Hisui is saved so there's no problem with her, but she's probably going to be the epicenter after this.
I'm expecting Princess Shistina to handle her well.

"Princess, we don't know if Hisui will turn into a monster again. Please let me look after it."
"No-!"

Princess Doris's wet nurse tried to keep Hisui, which had turned into a monster once, away

from Princess Doris, but Princess Doris obstinately refused her.
Hugged by Princess Doris, the songbird chirps, 'piru piru', for help in agony.

>Unit name [Hisui] wishes to join you. Do you approve? (YES/NO)

A pop up window over Hisui appeared.

--What the heck is this?

For now I'll choose no since it looks dangerous.

Refused by me, Hisui looks sad with tears on its eyes, but I'll harden my heart.
I mean, my hunch is tingling with trouble.

"Hey, loli princess. The bird that's just been saved will die if you hug it that strong you know?"
"Nn, dangerous."

Warned by Arisa and Mia, the princess who notices Hisui's condition loosen her hug.
Using that chance, Hisui slips out of the princess's arms and flies out of the window.

"Aaa, Hisui flew away."

The princess weeps bitterly to her failure.
I put a marker on Hisui so I can catch it later.

It should stop flying in midnight, I can just catch it then.
Princess Doris's wet nurse is worried about it, but Hisui probably won't change into a monster again. I've taken out that much magic essence after all, so it should be fine as long as the bird don't get artificially manipulated.

"Zadou, catch Hisui"

Princess Doris grasps my sleeves while wailing.

"Princess, even if it's the viscount, catching a bird flying in the sky is impossible."
"No! Bizuii"

Then a new visitor shows up.

"What's wrong, Doris. Did Hisui escape?"
"Soltrick-niisama, please catch Hisui."

The one that appeared is the 32 year-old first prince of Shiga Kingdom.
He's the older brother of Princess Shistina from the same mother.

"Sure thing. You guys, catch the bird with some nets. Take a skilled wind magician with you too."

The prince ordered one of his aide, making an arrangement to catch Hisui.

Unlike the third prince Sharlick who looked like a playboy, the first prince looks like a honest military man. I wonder if it's because of his powerful eyebrows?

He looks around wonderingly at the room that's been wasted by the monster-sified Hisui.

"Tina. What on earth happened to this room?"
"Nii-sama, actually a monster had appeared in this room."

Princess Shistina plainly replied the prince's question.
As it is now, Hisui who's been saved will be killed.

Princess Shistina probably realizes that too.
She hurriedly tries to change the story's direction.

"H-however! With Viscount Pendragon's effort, the monster has been suppressed and disappeared like a mist."

--Forced! That's too forced, Princess Shistina!

"The defeated monster disappeared like a mist?"

The prince turns to me with suspicious eyes.

I know. I know that feel well.
Can't be helped, I'll ask Deception skill-sensei to do the work again.

"Please allow me to explain. I think it was most likely a monster with mist body called『Mirage』.『Mirage』can read people's minds and change its shape. It probably changed into Princess Doris's loved bird since that would make us hesitant to strike it."
"Hmph, ridiculous."

Oh, the prince is tough.

"Even if you're telling the truth, there is no monster that can pass through the Ancient King-sama's barrier protecting the royal castle."
"Your highness, red rope pattern was emerging from the monster."

I dropped another information to the prince who was denying.

"What! Was it an advance party of greater demons!"
"It wouldn't be strange for red ropes that could appear anywhere to appear here!"
"Impossible.... So the red ropes haven't disappeared with the defeat of the greater demon."
"Then, does that mean something like that will happen again."

The ones who reacted weren't only the prince, his aides too.

"Quiet, fools. My sisters are worried."

As expected of the next king, he has the nerves of steel.
The prince jerks his chin, urging me to continue.

"Someone probably brought it inside the royal castle in order to overthrow the kingdom."
"What do you think their aim is?"
"By harming the princess, it might be a warning that the incident from the other day isn't over--no, perhaps, they want to plant the seed of anxiety in the royal castle."

It seems the prince is satisfied with my answer, he's contemplating things.
I told it like so in order to make him understand, but in fact, I think this incident was simply one of the trap for the greater demon attack back then that was activated late.

Looking at the circumstantial evidence, normally you'd have judged that the criminal is Marquis Kelten who gave Hisui to Princess Doris.
It's most likely a plot by people who want to keep him, who's been called a patriot, away from military.

There's a possibility that it was done by someone related to this [Highness] from the green demon's secret plot, but I think that possibility is low.
Those guys are looking for orbs in order to [Hatch] the [Highness].
Their actions are too far apart with each other, hence why I think so.

"Seed of anxiety huh--"

After muttering that, the prince survey the people in the room, and nods once.

"--It's certainly effective it seems. In the name of crown prince Soltrick Shiga, I order. I forbid you to disclose the incident that occurred here. Take it in your heart because people who violate it will be punished."

The people in the room kneel and bow to the prince's dignified words.
As expected. Thanks to that my doing won't leak outside.

"Viscount. My sisters life would have been no more if it wasn't for you. If you want, you can marry either of them. How about it?"

Your eyes aren't laughing, Prince!
And also, Princess Shistina, please don't look so happy!

"I am very honored with the offer, but I am merely an upstart noble. Such an honor is beyond my position."
"Then shall I raise your peerage?"

A prince doesn't have that kind of authority right?

"No, my current position as viscount is already too excessive--"
"Then how about government post? The current Kelten's successor is a bit incompetent you see. You should be able to work well right?"

Oy oy, Marquis Kelten's successor is an authority of military right?
To give such position to an upstart noble, that's too unnatural even if it's for raising my position.

"Your highness, you jest. An official position for a fledging lowest seated upper noble does not exist."
"Right.... Then let me hear your wish. I'll grant it with my authority as a crown prince."

There isn't any in particular, but I can't exactly say "none."

Something that can only be granted by a prince, something that's moderately valuable.
Moreover, something that won't burden the kingdom.

....Yup, I just got the right idea for it.

"Then let me take up on that offer--may I have a letter of introduction to Echigoya Firm?"
"Echigoya Firm?"

Arisa and Mia who know the truth probably see it as a charade, but they prudently keep silent.
I think I should ignore them staring at me with mouth half open though.

"I have heard that that company makes very excellent magic swords, but I cannot order it since I don't have a letter of introduction. With a letter of introduction from your highness, Echigoya Firm shouldn't be able to bluntly refuse."
"I can grant you those magic swords myself though?"
"No, the kingdom's magic swords should only be used by the knights of kingdom. Having the letter of introduction is quite enough for me."

I can make 10 of them in parallel if I just have 30 minutes after all.

"Very well. Prime Minister and Duke Oyugock told me about it, you really are unselfish."
"I am honored."

I replied the amazed prince politely.

"I do not praise you. Be more greedy of your want if you are a noble. You'll get used by the fools if you're too unselfish."
"I'll engrave it in my heart."

I reply the prince who kindly advised with the finest retainer bow.
With my Attentive Ears skill, I should be the only one who heard Arisa muttering "Tsundere prince".

◇

I left the princess's room after promising meeting her in the evening party.
Hisui is on the big sakura tree. Since the crown prince's subordinates seem to be working

hard for it, it doesn't seem like I'll need to go out at night to catch the bird.

Arisa asks while we're riding the carriage.

"Hey hey, did you use magic to turn back the monster earlier?"
"It was not magic. It's probably not a skill either I think?"

I answered so, and then Arisa and Mia ask together with amazed faces.

"Then what is it?"
"Strange."
"I don't know either. I tried doing since I felt like I could do it somehow, and I did."
"Somehow, you say."
"Mwu?"

Not satisfied, the two draw closer and I push them back.

"I think it's the same reason why I can grasp and destroy magic and barrier, but I don't know that reason."

It might be the effect from among my many skills, but there's too many of them to inspect.

"Then what about that strange Nectar?"
"It's just an upper grade magic potion."

I take out a small bottle of upper magic potion from the barrel in the storage.

--Huh?

"What's the matter?"
"No, it's nothing. This is the medicine."
"Hee, it looks slightly reddish isn't it."

Arisa opens the small bottle's lid and put a bit of the liquid in her palm.
Right at that moment, Mia opens her eyes wide and raises voices of surprise.

"The spirits have gathered. They've gathered, it's true you know? There's a lot of them."

Surprised with Mia who speaks in long sentences after a long while, I also activate Spirit Seer skill.
Surprisingly, a lot of spirits are gathered on Arisa's palm, enough that I can't see them.

"Hee, wonder if it's this medicine's effect? It's a Nectar after all huh."

Arisa says so and laughs.

However, I don't have the confident to laugh together with her.

I mean, the upper-grade magic potion that's been mixed with my blood is displayed as

[Nectar] on the AR reading before I knew it....

◇

Our carriage passes through the Noble street, and then goes back toward the mansion with Zena Squad as guards.

Today we went around tea parties until the evening.
I couldn't exactly bring Arisa and Mia to the tea parties, so I let them join Liza and the others in the labyrinth with Unit Arrangement.
Lulu had cooked some freshly caught ingredients, but since I had to eat various things in the tea parties, I left after only tasting Lulu's superb dishes.

The afternoon tea parties were all with upper nobles, so preparing the gifts for them was troublesome.
I have to alter the gifts in accordance to each of their positions, so balancing it was difficult.

I went around attending tea parties with Zena Squad as the guards, and got to hear various rumor.

The prime minister who also holds the position of minister of the newly established [Tourism Ministry] seems to be having a dispute for the position of vice minister.
Many capable nobles of pedigree are running for it, but it seems the prime minister isn't agreeing.

The ominous word, "Pass", of the prime minister from my luncheon with him floats in my mind hard.

....It's alright.

With that many candidates running for it, there should be one who can win the prime minister's favor, no doubt.

As for the other rumor I've heard, it was about the decreasing trend of thievery that started with orbs theft.

I also heard that the noble victims were able to get their family heirlooms back through Echigoya Firm.
It's probably about the connection-making that the Manager talked about.
As always she acts fast, how reliable.

After the tea parties were over, I met the children in the labyrinth, and received countless magic cores and every kind of materials.

"An Ice Stone huh, you got some unusual thing."
"Un? That was from a POP-ed treasure chest. It was in the chest with the『Bell』over there."

I check the hand bell that Arisa points at.

This bell is a magic tool called [Magic Sealing Bell], it seems to have the power to repel possessing ghosts.
Although I don't know how effective it is, it's quite an interesting item.

"Body, flank, scatter~ pound~?"
"Pochi did a lot today nodesu!"
"Worked hard"

Everyone is telling me the events in the labyrinth.
I praise everyone's activity.

"We made a crab nabe today."
"It was great you know. We used the giant crab's shell as the nabe pot, and did all-you-can-eat crab meat!"
"It was delicious, so I report to Master."

Lulu, Arisa, and Nana talk about seafood lunch they had.
At first I only wanted to taste it a bit, but I certainly want to participate too next time.

"The grilled diamond fish's crunchiness were fresh, the taste was transparent."
"Only Liza-san could eat that."
"Teeth can't stand it~?"
"The diamond was hard nodesu."

I don't remember a fish that hard.
Perhaps they found a rare pop monster.

I'll look for it in the labyrinth later.

But before that, let's enjoy a dinner with everyone and Zena Squad who have worked hard.
A former royal chef that the butler has prepared is going to show his skill for today's dinner, so I'm anticipating it even now.

"Really working forward to it, Master."
"Yeah, let's eat many delicious things, and steal the taste."
"Yes, Master!"

While conversing with Lulu, I open the door to the dining room.

13-24. Secret of the Red Rope

Satou's here. I can't follow forced events in RPG games where I seek freedom, though I'm fine if it's in novel games. When I've become the side that create them, I understand that making it like that is easier though.

◇

After having a dinner together with everyone and Zena squad, I went to Echigoya Firm in Kuro form.

The dinner by the former royal chef was splendid.

The flavor itself didn't differ much from mine or Lulu's, but the steamed fish was decorated with pickled flower inviting small joy, and there were balanced sour and bitter small dishes in between the main dishes so that we wouldn't get tired with the taste, it was a refreshing meal.
These kind of little attentions to details and scheme might come from the chef's experience as a royal chef that surpass the limit of skill .

It was truly a good experience--.

"Kuro-sama, did anything good happen?"

The manager asked about my good mood.
Tifaliza who's turning the documents beside the manager is having an undisturbed composed face like usual.

"It's nothing much. Leaving that aside, give me the report for the second day of the auction."
"Yes, certainly."

The things exhibited in the second day of the auction were many kinds of magic medicines.

"The exhibited items this time were 64 bottles of hair growth formula, 288 bottles of vitality medicine, 24 bottles of mid-grade stamina medicine, 24 bottles of mid-grade magic power medicine, 144 bottles of nutrient, 20 bottles of lumbago medicine, 20 bottles of stiff shoulder medicine, 144 bottles of headache medicine, in total there were 952 articles."

The popular hair growth formula's share is one unit per month so there was only a few of them exhibited. The vitality medicine's share is in dozens unit so they're exhibited.

"Did we exhibit lumbago and stiff shoulder medicines too?"
"Yes, we got quite good feedback when I tried giving four of them each to civil officials who were working under high pressure all years, so I had them exhibited."

I had made those medicines as a joke with no real use, so giving all of them to the civil

officials is no problem.
All of the ingredient for the medicine can be gotten plentifully in the upper layer of the labyrinth and making them isn't a hard work anyway, maybe I should make them more if they have frequent customers.
I was troubled with stiff shoulders when I was in the former world, so I know their hardship after all.

"The total amount we got from the auction is 3592 gold coins."

Fuh~n, that's that huh.
Around 10% of magic swords--no wait.

Something's strange.

It's no wonder when it's magic swords that can only be mass produced by me, but in case of magic medicines, anyone can make them as long as they have the ingredients and the recipes you see?

"That's higher than the anticipated. Did anything happen?"
"Yes, we had expected that there would be scramble for the hair growth formula and vitality medicines, however--"

If you had expected them, you could have just told me and I would have mass produced them all-night.

"During the opening, the proxies of Duke Bishtal and Marquis Llyoid were having a fierce bidding war for it, so the other people were lured and bid for it too. Moreover, both of them are popular item that need reservation more than one month in advance after all."

I see....
Still, even though neither Duke Bishtal nor Marquis Lloyd is bald, what are they going to use hair growth formula for?
Wonder if their relatives need it?

"The stamina medicines were won by my knight parent's house who are going to war, but the magic power medicines were won by the people of Shiga 33 Wands."
"--It appears that the market has evaluated that the medicine has the same recovery effect as the upper-grade magic power medicine."

Tifaliza supplemented the manager's report.

Upper grade magic medicines don't seem to be sold in general, so I understand how it had become a competition.
After all, no one will agree to make them even if you ask a famous alchemist, because gathering the ingredients for it is annoying.

Above all, in order to get [Blood Bead], you'll need to go into the [Labyrinth of Dead] the den of undead, and defeat some vampires.

Moreover, on top of vampires being tough enemies, the [Blood Bead] is a rare drop.
It's really hard to get them by just winning in a straight shogi match.

"The nutrients were selling as expected, there is nothing special to mention. The lumbago, stiff shoulders, and headaches medicines were all bought by the family of the prime minister."
"--A letter regarding that matter has arrived from Prime Minister-sama."

I confirm the letter that Tifalize gave me.
There's a sealing wax politely placed.

I break the seal with the paper knife the manager handed to me.

"What has the prime minister written?"
"It's a request from the prime minister to buy them regularly."

It doesn't seem that the prime minister is using them himself, I think they should just ask some magician to heal them if they need to use medicines regularly.
It seems my doubt was transmitted, Tifaliza's ice blue eyes jolt and then she adds.

"The effect of Kuro-sama-made stiff shoulders and headache medicines is immediate and long-lasting, it's better than low-grade magic potion. They might be inferior to mid-grade magic, but if someone were to employ a mid-magic-user magician for such a trivial thing, they will surely lose their job."

Perhaps, Tifaliza suffers from headaches too?
I should mass produce them since I have the diluted recipe anyway.

"Give a positive answer to the prime minister. I'll also give the recipes for the three of them later. Employ people that are skilled enough and check whether they can produce something equal."

If there are a lot of demand for it, then I can just increase the supply.
I want to welcome Echigoya Firm that can keep their balance in black with more commodity without me.

◇

Items made in the downtown workshop were exhibited in the second auction hall but since they were sold at normal price, I ignored them.
It's fine as along as they're in the black unrelated to me.

After finishing the paperwork, I drink the tea made by the new slave maid to quench my thirst.

I put some Mont Blanc cake as the tea cake for the executives.
I got it from Lulu with some nice chestnuts.

"Kuro-sama, I am sorry for the impudent request beforehand, but do you know the current position of a person called Toril?"

The manager unusually asked that.
The name doesn't sound familiar.

I searched the territory that's under direct control of the king on the map, and found that there were one in the nearby village, one in a junction town, and one in the mountains of the royal capital's outskirt. It seems they're the only three with the name.

"It's not that I don't know, but what is it for?"
"Knowing the location of that person is a requirement to secure the cooperation of a potent collaborator."

--I see, he's the link needed to create a collaborator for Echigoya Firm.

There is no need to hesitate if the manager appraises them as a [Potent Collaborator].

"I don't mind, but how old is this Toril?"
"Yes, he's a 11 year old boy."
"That one is in the cave in the mountains north-northwest of the Royal Capital. Do you need a map?"
"Y-yes, if it's possible...."

I draw it on the paper that Tifaliza's handed.
Drawing the contour line would be better, but then it wouldn't be like a fantasy world's map, so I stopped myself.

I take another piece and draw the map for the inside of the cave.

"I don't know what you'll use it for, but there are lethal traps on this point, so tell it to the other party."
"Yes, I understand."

I obviously overdid it, but since I can erase Kuro's position anytime, there's no problem--.

If I get involved in something troublesome, I can make it so that Kuro dies in a fight with a demon lord.
Of course, I'll perform as the demon lord that defeats Kuro myself.

--I thought of some stupid thing, but the manager probably will manage how much information will be given to the other party.
She knows that I hate troublesome things, so I'm sure she will do it well.

When I was hesitating whether to ask for another refill, my ears heard an auditory hallucination.

--Pipiru, piru.

"Kuro-sama, is that bird Kuro-sama's pet?"

The manager puts her hands on her cheeks and asks.
There's a jade colored bird resting on the overcoat rack before her field of vision.

"--Kuro-sama, please be careful."
"What's wrong? Tifaliza?"
"That bird invaded Kuro-sama's office which has the windows and the door shut."

The manager holds her breath after hearing Tifaliza.
In order to prevent espionage, I've put air ventilation magic tools in this room, the windows and the door are completely sealed.

--Piru, piru.

Hisui turns toward me, chirps once again, and like before--

>Unit name [Hisui] wishes to join you. Do you approve? (YES/NO)

--A pop-up window appeared.

Of course I choose NO.
I hate forced events that are looped until you choose YES.

--Piru.

Rejected again by me, Hisui looks sorrowful with teary eyes, and then it flies outside the room like a pubertal girl that's been dumped.
At that time, I saw with my own eyes that it flew away without breaking the glass window.

In addition, confirming its detail on the map, I see that Hisui's status has changed greatly compared to before.
Level 10 is normal, but it's now classified as a Mythical Beast, and its race has changed to [God Bird].

It seems the race has special abilities of [Material Permeation], [Short Distance Teleport], and [Protective Coloration].
I feel that it'll be an excellent spy if I can tame it--wait it has no mean to communicate with me huh. I can't translate its pirupiru chirping after all.

Pursuing Hisui's marker, I understand that it's heading to the royal castle's villa.
It's probably returning to Princess Doris's place this time.

◇

After a moment of relief, it seems I'm loved by troubles today.
When I teleported back to Pendragon Mansion nearby Echigoya Firm, an alarm came from the scarecrows deployed on the royal capital's outskirts.

-Ton, tsu, tsu. Ton, tsu. Ton, tsu, ton....

I open the map and search for the demon OR specific levels.
Found the mock body (avatar) of the green demon on the edge of the territory under direct control of the king. It's moving speed is fast, looks like it's riding a tamed wyvern.

I moved to a mountain range several kilometers away from the Royal Capital with Unit Arrangement.
Defeating it too fast might expose my searching ability after all.

Apparently, the green demon's mock body goes down to a place two mountains away from here, and intends to go to the Royal Capital by land.

It's easy to eliminate it here and now, but now that I have a chance, I'll let it roam free and capture the green demon's cooperators all at once.
I put markers on the mock body and the wyvern, and then I move to the rooftop of the Shin boy's orphanage.

Hikaru isn't here except for the time when I can't deploy urgently.

Right now she's delivering my handmade whale meat dishes for the Griffon and the Dragons.
I've given her a disposable long-distance communication device this time, so there's no problem. I'll come to her if there's a signal from her.

And then, the mock body who's finally invaded the Royal Capital late at night is caught on my view.
The mock body this time is a foreigner-looking person with dark brown skin.

"The slums huh...."

The mock body advances through the back alley of the slums while greeting some sleeping beggars along the way.
Just in case, I put markers on the men it had greeted.

After passing through the slums, the mock body jumps over a wall of a mansion in the wealthy area, invading it.
I activate Magic Essence Camouflage skill and tails the back of the mock body.

--This place is?

I noticed it when I saw another marker inside the mansion.
This is the family house of Souya boy who's called his highness.

....Don't tell me, he's the real [Highness]?

I'm baffled to link someone who's unexpectedly kind despite his arrogant attitude to an existence called demon lord.

I saw the mock body going through the back door, but then it went through a passage to a detached building of the mansion.

"--I brought a message from Mirage."
"Who the hell are you?"

A half-naked slender man that came out of the detached building scowls at the mock body suspiciously.

Confirming it on the map, it seems the slender man is a fallen noble.
Besides the fact that his father belongs to the carefree occult group [Wind of Liberty] in the Royal Capital, his connection with demons is unknown.

"Together with the Light of liberty"
"Seeking liberty, the Wings ride upon the Wind."

I heard some kind of password with Attentive Ears skill.
This is good. I'll have to tell this to the prime minister later and make use of it during the arrest.

"Looks like you're the real Hyakumen. As always, your disguise is amazing...."

--Hyakumen? Is it the nickname of the green demon that's like a Hyakumensou?
So the green demon has come in contact with this man many times before with its mock body.

"And, what's the message?"
"There is no change in the plan. As soon as you get the orb, tell them to act together with the snake charmers."
"Then should I continue giving food mixed with the pills from the weasels to the poor?"
"Of course. Mirage has not said to stop it."
"Understood."

--Pills?

And also, snake charmers huh.... There shouldn't be any in the Royal Capital when I searched them before though.

"I have told you what's needed."
"Yeah, certainly. Oh right, the fund is running low...."
"Hmph, that again. I don't mind if you use it for liquor or women, but don't neglect your work you hear me?"
"Of course. I don't want to be killed by Mirage."

A pouch thrown by the mock body falls before the slender man, gold coins are spilt from it.
Apparently, the slender man is cooperating with the demons for money.

After scornfully glancing once at the slender man who jumped at the gold coins, the mock

body leaves the mansion behind.
Afterward, he went to the hideout's basement where Ropo was after going around three thief hideouts.

I see the mock body taking out some kind of magic tool from the bag it's carrying.
Looks like it's a barrier generator tool to help it hide itself.

After checking that the barrier has been deployed, the green demon plops down on the broken bed.
Do demons get tired too?

"Fuu, that deplorable white hair shouldn't be able to find me here zamasu."
"--Not really, no."

I decapitate the dark brown mock body who hurriedly got up the bed.

"I-impossible. Did you lurk here all this time zamasuka!"

Like I'd do that--.

I finely chop the green demon's mock body's head.
It seems the mock body's stamina has been exhausted, its crumbling remains become black mist and disperse.

I thought of interrogating the demon, but in order to pass the tomorrow's auction in peace, I prioritized eliminating it.
The mock body probably will come again after it's respawned, interrogating the people who got in contact with the green demon should do just fine.

I've completed the magic to track the green demon's main body anyway, so its fate should run out after I get the Chant Orb.
Good grief, a mid-boss should have just obediently wait for the hero in the demon lord's castle.

--There's no such thing as demon lord's castle though.

In addition, the barrier generator tool is made by human so I put it in the Storage.

I report the thieves and beggars that got in contact with the green demon to the authorities and leave the rest to them, and then as Kuro, I go toward the slender man who seems to know various things, I'll make him spit it all out.

For the sake of spending the third day of the auction tomorrow in peace, there will be no mercy!

13-25. Secret of the Red Rope (2)

Satou's here. Talking about interrogation reminds me of spy movies. It seems even interrogation can have change in fashion, from violent and torture, to guiding through words and drugs like truth serum, they're changing through ages.

◇

When I get near the detached building where the slender man is, I hear voices of men and women entwining.
It's boorish of me to disturb an exercise of love, but let's have them sacrificed for the sake of the public welfare.

When I kicked the entrance and intruded, the sound suddenly stopped, and then I heard some rustling sounds like they'd flee.

After passing through the entrance and entering the bedroom inside, a half-naked beauty with coquettish smiles turns toward me.
If someone were to put their hands to someone her age in Japan, they'd be caught due to the juvenile protection regulation.

"That guy has escaped. Go there if you want to chase after him. Or maybe you want to play with me? It's just one gold coin a night you know?"

I throw the cloth near my feet to the girl, covering her naked body.
She doesn't seem to be shy, but she's probably not a flasher either.

"Tell me if you know the things he's done."
"He's a trash whose parents are fallen nobles, shamelessly leeching off in this house by depending on the favor that his father did long ago. Is it okay with that much?"

Just when I thought that she told me easily, it seems she's going to charge now.
The girl signals with her fingers to give her money, so I takes several gold coins from my storage and throw it to the bed.

"....Did that guy do something to be guilty of?"

Looks like the girl became cautious instead since it was too much.
I'll not hide it and make her speak for her sake too.

"It's treason. You're not his mistress or collaborator right? If you speak everything you know, I won't accuse you of the crime as an information provider."
"O-okay. That's why please promise me not to involve my little sister and mother..."

Looks like the crime of treason is more serious than I thought.

To the girl who's desperately clinging to me, I tell, "That' depends on the information you

provide", and push her behind.
Taking advantage of a girl who's worried about her family like this, I'm quite awful if I do say so myself.

"He had been engrossed in a society called『Wind of Liberty』since a while ago, but ever since his father was shut out of the high society, he said something like,『This world is wrong for not accepting me』and then began to associate with some strange foreign people."
"Do you know which country they're from?"
"I think they're probably from Holy Kingdom Parion. They said something like,『The kingdom of the god who brought the hero summoning is the preceptor of demon lord believers』."

--Preceptor (oshou)? Ah, she means hotbed (onshou).

So it's just someone who's into an occult club that's dissatisfied with his situation and gets pulled into the road of evil by the people of the Holy Kingdom Parion huh.

"Some beastfolk merchants also often showed up here. They were probably weaselfolk kin."
"Do you know which firm they belong to?"
"I can't differentiate their faces, but looking at the differences of their clothings' expensiveness, I think there are around three kind of merchants coming in and out. He threw the transaction papers into that shelf, I think you'll know it if you see them."

This girl is quite a good source of information.

After collecting the documents from the shelf, I learn the names of the weaselfolks.
One of them is a man called Usan who's delivered platinum to Echigoya Firm.
Judging from the documents, there's a high chance that he's not simply in charge of transportation.

It seems the slender man carried the [Pills] thing that appeared in the conversation between the slender man and the green demon earlier, there's nothing of it left in this detached building.

Now then, I've heard what I need to hear.

"Wear your clothes and leave this mansion. Do not come here again."
"U-un. That's why--"
"I'll arrange so that you won't be charged of treason, do not worry."
"Un, thank you."

I turn away after seeing the girl who runs with her clothes still in disarray, and then collect all the items in this detached building into my storage.
Just to be sure, I also collected all the junk in the basement.
I did it broadly in order to prevent me overlooking any clue.

I was thinking of letting the slender man roaming free to catch the other collaborators, but he only hid in an inn in the outskirts, and didn't contact anyone.

There's no helping it, so I decided to raid the inn.
I don't want to trouble the other guests, so I make use of my hiding skills to invade and catch the slender man.
There's no meaning to catching him quietly if I interrogate him like this, so I move to the prime minister's intelligence bureau with Unit Arrangement.

"Who's there--what, it's Kuro-dono. Please don't surprise me."
"Sorry. Let me borrow the underground torture chamber."
"Please go ahead, no one is using it today."

I head toward the torture room while being sent off by the skinhead with stitch wound on his face.
I don't remember ever getting acquainted with the macho man, but since it saves me the trouble of explaining who I am, I'll consider it a good thing.

◇

"Wake up--"

I tie the slender man near the wall, and splash him with water from the bucket below.
The slender man who's woken up is overwhelmed by the atmosphere of the torture room and looks like he's going to faint anytime.

"You're awake. If you're going to make this difficult, I'll let a pervert muscle man to turn your body into something that isn't appropriate for a groom you understand?"

It was just a light joke, but the slender man nods buzzingly.

"Answer my questions, do not question back. Nod for 'yes'. Also nod for affirmation. I do not permit any other answer."

I threaten the slender man with the lines of an interrogator from some movie I've seen before.
I ask the first question while the slender man is affirming his will to answer.

"Talk about the pills. Your life will be prolonged the more you talk. Keep that in your mind while you're talking."

It seems my kind persuasion is having an effect, the slender man talks obediently.

"T-the pills were first brought by a suspicious guy called Po-Propor. He said it was a medicine for epidemic disease."
"Medicine for epidemic disease?"

Propor and the green demon can't be ones who do charity.

I take out some pills from the bag that the slender man was carrying.
A lot of them are jintan-sized[W] but there are also some that are as big as a pachinko ball.

The pill's name is [Reborn Seed].
According the information from the AR reading, "Absorb the surrounding magic essence, increase physical strength and resistance."
The, "Medicine for epidemic disease" part is probably not a lie, but the "Absorb the surrounding magic essence" part sounds dangerous.

Expecting the slender man to know something, I decide to ask a leading question.

"--And the true effect of the pill is?"
"....You knew already right?"

It seems he knows.

"Answer the question."
"Those are fiend drugs. I saw a man who couldn't stand his hunger swallowing up a large amount of the pills died. The form of that man was exactly the same as the people from Violet who took too much fiend drug."

The slender man spit out words like he couldn't stand the sin anymore.

The figures of the crime slave unit of the kingdom called Violet are flashing in my mind, reminding me the grotesque forms of those soldiers.

However, even though there's a record of people dying from taking too much fiend drug, there's no case where the victims become grotesque looking.
Perhaps the fiend drug is concentrated, turning it into reinforcement type--or perhaps, it might be a [completely different thing].

At the very least, there's a high chance that these pills are the main cause of the red rope monsters and Hisui's case.

I can try experimenting it with animals, but it probably doesn't have immediate effect.
I'll bring the pills to the Royal Research Institute later and ask them to investigate the ingredient.

◇

Next I'll ask about the snake charmers--just when I think I about that, I notice something I forgot to ask.

I remember him saying, "Mixed with the food distributed to the poor", during his conversation with the green demon.
I have to question that.

"Next, talk about how you use the pills."
"....I distributed it."

The slender man stops talking halfway through, I urge him to continue with my eyes.

"I distributed it to the people and the orphanages in downtown."

--Orphanages?

"I distributed it saying that they were medicine for epidemic disease. ...The drunkards didn't take it since they said it made the liquor tasted bad, but most of the people were delighted because it made them more energetic they said. That's right, those people were delighted. Damn it....Those fools...."

I feels that the man directed the last "fool" toward himself more than to the people who took the pills.
But, what the slender man thinks doesn't matter.

Rather than that, the thing about the orphanages is bad.
Any medicine has strong effect to young children.

"Which orphanage?"
"W-which.... It's all of the orphanages in downtown."

I sent a menacing look, and then the slender man stopped his delirious talk, raised his head and answered my question.

Looking at the map, I understand that it's not only the orphanages, the pills also present in a large number in the metropolitan area.
As the slender man's said, most are in the orphanages and the dismantling places in the downtown. There are also some in the underpass, though only a few.
Unfortunately, some of them are also present in the room of Princess Doris's employees.
So this pill is really involved in Hisui monsterfication disturbance.

Fortunately, there isn't any in Shin boy's orphanage.

--No wait.

"You distributed it to all the orphanages in the downtown right?"
"Y-yea."
"Not even one was spared?"
"That's right. Propor reminded me repetitiously, so there's no mistake about it."

The slender man who didn't want to be tortured frantically reconfirmed.
I gave him the name of Shin boy's orphanage, but he was certain that that orphanage was given the pills too.

I search the other children from Shin boy's orphanage, but there wasn't any child having the symptom of someone who had been taking fiend drug.
That evil director might have sold the pills for money.

Let's continue the questioning.

"You said that the pills were first brought by Propor right? Then who brought it the second time and after?"
"It was weaselfolk kin merchants."
"Which firm they belong to?"
"Many. P-please wait! I-I'll say them all, so please."

It seems the slender man really doesn't want to be holed, he marvelously talks cooperatively.
I write the name of the weaselfolks merchants and their firms on the memo. There are many. Four times the number of the merchants written in the confiscated documents.
He's good to remember this many name.
He could have become someone great if he did a honest job....

Comparing it to the information on the map, I understand that around two-third of the weaselfoks kin in the Royal Capital are involved.
That's too many no matter how you see it.
It should have only involved one or two firms if they used back channel.

I can't deny the possibility that they're all involved in the plot, but I'll delegate that job to the prime minister.
It's better to leave the cross-national plot to the experts.

If it's just looking for the source of the pills, it'll be faster for me to just intrude the empire over there and search the map.

◇

The information about the pills has reached the limit, so I continue to the next.

"Spit out the thing about the『Snake Charmers』"
"....Ee, what about the snake charmers?"

The slender man looks like he's confused as to where to start, I question him about the one that's been bothering me.

"Where are the snake charmers hidden?"
"They're in the slums of the downtown."

I searched the map but I couldn't find them.

"Know that lies lead men to their ruin."
"I'm not lying! It's true! I'm not lying! We gave tools to the beggars in the slums and downtown for them to perform!"

Apparently, [Snake Charmers] are just side jobs for the beggars.

The slender man gave several names of the beggars, and when I confirmed it, I noticed that some of them had markers. They're the beggars who came in contact with the green demon.

"By tools, do you mean this flute?"
"T-that's right."

I noticed there was a lot of them in the bag when I took out the pills earlier.

"What is this flute?"
"Ee, that's the snake charmer's flute."
"I know that."

I point the flute before the slender man.

"What do you use it for? Is what I want to hear. Answer after thinking it through you listen?"
"Ee, outwardly it's a tool to manipulate the snake."

The threat worked, the slender man changed the direction of his answer.

"That flute can summons monster if it's played with a special tune, you see. Those flutes used by the snake charmers were the things that summoned the red rope that attacked the Royal Capital, you see."

I appraised the flute, but it doesn't have the function to do any summoning.
This flute only has the function to absorb the user's magic power to generate a specific pattern with Force magic's [Signal].
Even the name is [Signal Flute], so there should be no mistake about it.

--It's the same function as the harp that Princess Doris pestered Mia to play.

Looks like it's connected.

Certainly, a snake charmer was always present whenever the red rope monster's outbreak happened.
I didn't notice it since they were everywhere in the royal capital, but it seems they were the triggers.

◇

I don't have the proof yet, but thinking that the main cause of the red rope monsters are, almost without a doubt, the pills and the Signal Flute should be alright.

I report the information I got from the slender man to the prime minister and the king.
The slender man was to be put through the capital punishment for the crime of treason, but I appealed to them to tolerate Souya boy's family for lending the man a detached building.
The present head of Souya boy's family couldn't got away from the punishment, but the family shouldn't bear the crime.
In addition, the beggars probably don't know the connection between the flutes and the monsters, so they'll probably only become slaves as the punishment.

Just in case, I tell them to strictly interrogate the beggars who came in contact with the

green demon.

After I've finished those arrangement, I head out to gather the remaining pills and Signal Flutes in the metropolitan area.
The red rope case should end with this.

The trade between with the weaselfolk kin empire will probably slow down, but I should let the big-wigs to worry about that.

◇

First, I go around the metropolitan area to collect the remaining Signal Flutes.
I changed my name to [Arsene] this time, and skip about in black mask. I didn't have any handy-looking title, so I picked the [One who Protects the Order] as a bit of a joke.

There wasn't anyone who had the flute in large number like the slender man, but individually, there were many who had them. Many of them are collector noble and the wealthy.

Every one of the flutes was protected with strong barrier and magic, but they are meaningless before Unit Arrangement and Magic Essence Camouflage, the unfair mean.

I felt like I was stealing from them somehow, so I decided to return the flutes after destroying the flutes' magic circuits later.
I left IOU notes with [Arsene] name in the houses that had kept the flutes.

Next, I go collect the pills.
Simply stealing them would be boring, so I left the same amount of konpeito as the pills to the orphanages, and small amount of money to the people of the downtown and the slums.

Doing it as Hero Nanashi is probably better after spreading the rumor that the pills are dangerous beforehand.
People won't agree to have their belongings stolen if you announce it suddenly after all.

Lastly, I found some mouse chewing on the pills when I was collecting them in the underpass.
I tried using [Signal Flute], but it didn't transform into a [Red Rope Monster].

After doing the experiment in every place I was collecting the pill at, for the sixth time--

The cockroach that has transformed into a red rope monster roars loudly.

--GOQUWEEEEEEEE.[1]

Ocher-colored mist is floating around the red rope cockroach.
To use magic right after transforming into a monster, it's some skilled cockroach alright.

I brush off the mist with a Short Stun bullet.

The red rope cockroach is only level 20, so it's already staggering just from the after-effect of the Short Stun bullet.

I didn't want to get close to it, so I froze it with [Freeze] magic and threw a pebble to destroy it.

I was able to verify it, so I only collected the pill afterward.

I'll leave it to the king and the prime minister to eliminate the potential red rope.
They can just form a unit that can defeat red rope monsters and let them explore the underpass while playing the flute.
It'll be faster if I do it myself, but I don't intend to do something that can be done even without me.

◇

When I've gone to the royal castle to report about the red rope cockroach, the king's office is noisy even though the date has changed.

"Heya, Nanashi-sama!"

The prime minister met me when I entered the king's office.
Apparently, a report about an oracle seems to have come from the Royal Capital's temple.

....Again huh. Gods are working too hard.

And, the content is--

『Fragment of cup breaks, False King is born』

By false king, maybe it's referring to an impostor of the king, an unqualified foolish king, or perhaps someone who wants to usurp the throne.

For the former, since Mito--the real Ancient King Yamato has appeared, there's a possibility that it's pointing that Hero Nanashi and the King are false.
If it's the latter, there's a possibility of coup d'etat happening, but with Marquis Kelten having lost his standing, there's no one who has enough influence to incite rebellion, so the prime minister says.

"What's the『Fragment of cup breaks』about I wonder?"

It made me recall the [Holy Grail] from the Sakuramochi Demon incident, but since it's enshrined in my storage, it probably isn't related.

"According to the theoligians and the temple people, there's a lot of case where the cup refers to a peaceful nation and complete state."

In other words, a part of a peaceful nation is revolting, is that it?

"Thinking from that, perhaps it's valid to think that the young nobleman who causes the rebellion in Bishtal Dukedom falsely assumes the title of king?"

A young minister beside the prime minister told his opinion.

I see, if we turn our attention outside the territory under the direct control of the king, that's probably the most appropriate.
To inform about someone who causes rebellion in a country, like this, the gods sure are caring.
It'll be better if they stop obstructing civilization from developing though.

It doesn't seem to be related to demons, so I excuse myself after I've exhausted all the information.
If there's a follow-up, there should be a contact from Echigoya Firm.

Today I'm busy.

I move to the mountain near the royal castle and eliminate the wyvern that the green demon rode.
Then I went to investigate the direction where I found the green demon.
Using Unit Arrangement for it is troublesome, so I investigate while using Flash Drive.

I went until some undeveloped land and the blue territory following a straight line from the discovery point of the green demon, but I couldn't find any potential place for it.
The blue territory is a den of monsters that's worse than I've heard, so I'll be intruding it once our girls have run out of their prey.
There's a pioneer village created by former explorers on the edge of blue territory, so visiting there seems fun too.

"Mu, it's the morning sun huh--"

There were more unplanned events than I thought, so there are many matters left in hanging.
I'm troubled that things that need to be checked have increased due to demons and demon lord believers.

It might be good to ask Arisa or Tifaliza to set up my inspection schedule.
Maybe because my drowsiness and mental fatigue have piled up, that foolish plan seems like a good idea

I did a stretch and renew my mind.

While basking in the daybreak light, I teleport to Boruenan Village where everyone is with Unit Arrangement.
Now then, it's the long-awaited third day of the auction at last.

Let's get fired up!

1. Cockraoch is 'Gokiburi' in Japanese.

13-26. The Third Auction Day

Satou's here. For examinations, for the first date, when I was making preparation for them, I often felt more anxious the more I did. I feel that that anxiety loosened up once I learned how to dump a bit of my enthusiasm.

◇

"Good morning, we've come to met you."

Zena-san whose smile has a trace of shadow comes to do a morning greet.

I've been too busy I feel that I've hardly talked to Zena-san lately.
Once I got my hands on the Chant Orb, I'd invite Zena-san and go on a Royal Capital picnic.
Our girls will be happy too.

Today Zena Squad is going to escort Arisa and Mia to the royal castle.

I was actually invited too, but the third auction day where the [Chant Orb] is being exhibited is more important, so I won't be attending with poor health as the reason.

Arisa who comes to the entrance hall with a cute princess-like dress takes a pose while looking proud.
After lightly praising her, I tell her what to do when she's asked about the matter yesterday.

"--Then, we should just maintain that we don't know the detail right?"
"Yeah, that's good enough."

I nod to Arisa.

"Ready."

And then, Mia who had dressed up came to the entrance hall.
When her eyes meet mine, she twirls on the spot.

When I told her that she was cute, she satisfyingly replied, "Nn".

"Then we'll be going. Do you have something to tell to her highness?"
"Nothing in particular--tell her my apology for my absence."
"Un, okay. You work hard too okay!"

I nod to Arisa's encouragement, and send them off after asking Zena-san and her friends to take care of Arisa and Mia.

"Everyone, what's your plan today?"

Returning to the living room, I check the other girls' plans.

Arisa and Mia aren't here today, so there will be no labyrinth expedition.

"I'll be staying in the kitchen since I want to review the dishes from yesterday."

Lulu asserted with a face full of spirit.
Looks like she was swinging the kitchen knife in Boruenan Village tree house's kitchen last night.

"Pochi wants to go to the school today nodesu."
"Hemu coming~"
"That's right nanodesu. We have a practice with great teacher Hemu nodesu."

I tell the two who are swinging wooden swords with faces full of excitement, "Don't use Magic Edge Cannon since it's dangerous okay."
They're able to fire Magic Edge Cannon with normal wooden swords recently, so I can't be carelesss.

"I will accompany them and watch over so that they won't make any mistake."
"I'm relieved to hear that from Liza. I'm counting on you."
"I will exert the utmost of my poor ability."

I feel like Liza would end up fighting Sir Heim instead, but she probably will refrain.

"We (boku-tachi) will go to the school as usual."

It seems Crow and Shiro like to go to school, it might be better to let them commute to the Royal Capital's academy from now on.
It might be good to let them teach the children in the Labyrinth City's training school later in the future.

"Crow, your words."
"--We (watashi-tachi)."

Pointed out by Shiro, Crow corrected her words.
The noble daughter whom the two get along with probably pointed out that girls using [Boku] is strange.

"What are you going to do Nana?"
"I'm hoping to do a classroom visitation. Master, please the permission."

--Classroom visitation?

Is there such an event in Shiga Kingdom?

I don't know if the school side would accept it, so I confirm it with the butler who seems to be in the know.

"I am not familiar with the term classroom visitation, however, they should accept parental

visit."
"What should I do to get the permission?"
"There is no problem if we send them a prior notice. We could send a maid with a letter informing them if Master wish for it today."
"Please."

A tactful employee like always.
The butler is the one writing the letter.

I saw off the children, and then a letter came from Sera of Tenion temple when I had gone back to the bedroom to prepare for the feigned illness.
It's probably about the prophecy I've heard in the royal castle last night.

Sera usually would have come visiting herself, but it seems she's in the royal castle's audience room with other big-wigs of Tenion temple.

I open the letter with a paper knife and read the content inside--

『Ring of flame encircles the world, the moon wakes up』

--so the verse of Sera's prophecy is written.

Looking at the [Moon] and [Wakes up] keywords, I imagine it's about the revival of the demon god, but the meaning is far too different than the『Fragment of cup breaks, False King is born』I heard yesterday.
Above all, if the demon god is really going to be revived, all the gods should have issued the same warning.

It's probably much ado about nothing, probably something like an annular solar eclipse.
It's normal for a world without scientific progress to treat solar and lunar eclipse as natural disasters.

I write a letter to thank Sera and give it to a maid, tell her that I can't meet anyone who comes and stay in the room.
Now then, I have to go out soon.

◇

"Kuro-sama, I've been waiting for you!"

The manager met me with sweet voice.
Today she's not dressed in her usual sharp director-style dress, but a refined-looking normal noble daughter dress.

It's similar to the dress that an earl daughter was boasting in the tea party yesterday.

Confirming it, it seems to be made from the same workshop.
The price is unreasonable at 30 gold coins, but that's probably not much considering the

manager's yearly income.

"Now! Let's go!"
"Please wait--"

Tifaliza's wise voice stops the manager who was going to link her arms wrapped in white gloves to mine.

"--Manager, you forget to report the information from the prime minister."
"I-I know."

Under the ice-like gaze of Tifaliza, the manager clears her throat with a cough.

"I was going to report it once we settle down in the noble seats of the auction hall."
"In truth, you forgot about since you could go on a date with Kuro-sama right?"

An executive girl who appeared from the room's entrance teased the manager who was making an excuse.
When the manager sent a sharp glance to her, she went to the finance room next door while saying, "scary scary."

The manager looks embarrassed with a red face.

....Sheesh.

We're going to the battlefield (auction), and yet there's not enough seriousness.

"Do that after you've completed your duty."
"Y-yes! I'll serve with my whole heart!"

For some reason, the manager's face is blushing harder than earlier even though I scolded her.
It seems she questionably misunderstood the [Duty] part.

"Kuro-sama, forgive me for my audacity, but allow me to report myself. Last night, the prime minister--"

Without giving the manager the chance to speak, Tifaliza smoothly tells me about the prophecy.
She even told me about the interpretation of the prophecy and who told what.

Unfortunately, there's no new information it seems.

After thanking Tifaliza, I head toward the auction hall with the manager.
The executives in charge of the auction should be waiting in the meeting place already.

◇

"We've been waiting for you. We've heard the story from his excellency prime minister.

Please submit the orbs for the exhibition."

I take the orbs from my Storage and give it to the supervisor of the auction hall.
Of course the three dangerous orbs like the Demon Summoning one are not for the exhibition, so I'm still carrying it.

--Wait for me. You'll be mine this noon.

I speak to the [Chant] orb that's on the supervisor's hand.
Of course there's no way it'll reply.

To the person who has appraisal skill beside the supervisor--

"W-what are you"

The supervisor's face becomes cramped when he sees the appraiser has sunk into the wall.
Fumu, an explanation is needed huh.

"That man is a thief. I'll take off the camouflage magic tool from his chest, let the man over there appraise it."

While doubting my words, the supervisor directs another appraiser.

"Th-this is a magic tool of『Job Disguise』. I-it's just as the person of Duke Mitsukuni has said, this man is a thief."
"No way! We have only employed people with trustworthy birth and parentage...."

Unlike the supervisor who's making an excuse, the other people in the room tie the thief that's been turned into a mess and takes him away.
I feel like I've gone a bit too far, but there is no mercy against thieves.

Right, there might be others too.
Squeezing the area around the auction hall, I search the map.

--One, two, three....

--Damn you pest (thieves).

I'll let you regret stepping into this place aiming for my『Chant Orb』.
I won't take their life, but I'll make their bodies unable to take anything but liquid food for half a month.

"I'll dispose of the other pest (thieves)."

After declaring so, I check the routes to the targets. I open the closed door with [Clairvoyance] and [Magic Hand] magic, securing the routes.
I fire [Remote Stuns] with dummy chant, sweeping off the auction hall.
In order to prevent any victim other than the targets, I pick the course to be near the ceiling.

I know from the map that the Remote Stun bullets have hit the targets one after another.

It seems two of them have avoided the first bullet, but that's no more than a useless resistance.
In fact, the thieves lost their consciousness after getting hit from successive bullets.

Fuffuffuu, the evils are destroyed.

"Kuro-sama?"
"It's alright. This much is within my expectation dayo (you see)."

I show a relieving smile toward the manager who looks worried.

"Dayo?"

The manager tilts her head wonderingly.
Oops--my original way of speaking that's not like Kuro's came out.

"Do not worry about small things."
"Y-yes...."

I have to be cooler--.

I look around at the dumbfounded people.
The supervisor keeps opening and closing his mouth, since he seems useless, I talk to the site supervisor who looks responsible.

"What are you getting absentminded for. There are two on the second floor, two in the warehouse, and one in front of the underground vault. Arrest them quick."
"Y-Yes!"

The site supervisor directs his subordinates to arrest them, and runs to the underground vault himself.
Good grief, I'd have liked it if they got a grip on themselves before the sweeping.

After confirming with my own eyes that the Chant Orb has been stored in the underground vault, we head to the upper noble participant waiting room led by a usherette.
In addition, I was warned by the usherette not to use magic in the meeting place.

◇

"--That is all of the procedures for bidding in the auction."

The explanation was long, but it's not that special.
One thing I find unusual is that you have to report the feasible amount of money you have for the bid beforehand, [You cannot bid if the bidding price is more than that amount].

"Is there any question?"
"Can you get the item you've successfully bid immediately?"

There are many things I want to hear, but I'll confirm the most important one.

"No, it will be delivered during the recess on the first floor. The guards in charge of the delivery will be stand by the successful bidder, so please be advised."

It seems they don't bring the won item to the waiting room in order to prevent crime.

The auction will have three two-hour bidding time and one-hour rest time each, nine hours in total.
I thought the rest time was too long when I first heard it, but it seems there's a reason for that.

The door is knocked and then a woman along with guards enter.

"It seems the official appraiser has come. Then, sorry for the inconvenience, but would you please present the money for the bid."

Urged by the usherette, I open the Item Box and take out bags with gold coins inside.
I arrange them on the table one by one. Each one has 100 gold coins inside.

"Amazing...."
"As expected of the house of duke even though they've just emerged."

Attentive Ears skill picked up the maids waiting near the wall talking in low voice.

I keep putting the gold coin bags on the table without minding it.

"Eh...."
"U-um...."

The usherette and even the appraiser look surprised.
They should have gotten used seeing only this much--what strange people.

The table can't hold the gold coin bags any longer, so I call the two.

"Looks like the table's legs have been broken. Do you mind if I put the rest on the floor?"

The usherette, the appraiser and even the guards behind them aren't replying with their mouths hanging open.
Please answer immediately with YES or NO.

I interpreted the silence as YES, so I put gold coin bags one after another on the floor, and then the usherette finally moves.

"P-please wait!"
"What is it? Is the floor giving in?"
"No, that's not it!"

The usherette whose atmosphere feels like she's from the high society is swinging her arms

buzzingly with a face that suits her age.
It's cute, but isn't that bad for her work?

"How many gold coins have you prepared?!"
"For now, it's around 300.000 pieces?"

If that's not enough, around 10 million gold coins of Furu Empire are waiting in my storage you know?

"D-do you want to bid the whole city!?"

--How exaggerated.

"Calm down. You are being discourteous."
"P-please forgive me...."

The usherette droops after getting persuaded by the appraiser.

"Either way, it is impossible for me to judge that much. I'll sequentially inspect several samples, afterward please take the notes for the indicated amount of money."

The appraiser said so and then appraised about three bags.
In the end, even though I have only showed them 300 bags for the 30.000 gold coins, they give me 30 notes for bidding that indicate 10.000 gold coins each.

It seems the amount of money for the bidding is announced through the loudspeaker while these notes are being posted.
Since the appraiser only brought five 10.000 gold coin notes, the remaining 25 were delivered to the room later.

And then, after waiting for around an hour.

The announcement for the opening of the third auction day is broadcasted.

"--Then, let's go."
"Yes, Kuro-sama."

I lead the manager by hands, walking toward the noble seats of the auction hall while linking arms.

The auction (battle) finally begins!

13-27. The Third Auction Day (2)

Satou's here. I like Hollywood movies. I can't get enough of the characters escaping dangers one after another without even having the chance to breath. However, I think calm and quiet are better in reality.

◇

The auction has begun.
Around 300 people are sitting on the college hall-like mortar-shaped hall.
The noble seats area that we are located at sticks out on the inside of the hall like a balcony, and there are several of it.
Looks like there are around 30 of it in total.

According to the pamphlet as the substitute of the usherette, the orb auction is after the very first one, so it looks like I'll be bored for an hour.

『Everyone! This [Farsight Scope] was excavated from a treasure chest in the 1-3 area of Selbira's Labyrinth--』

The host is explaining the exhibited item while holding a mic in one hand.
There was no explanation who the exhibitor is.

The bid began before long, but--

『10 gold coins』
『10 gold coins and two silver coins』
『10 gold coins and four silver coins』
『11 gold coins』

And such, the bidding amounts are very tight.

The auction hall is slightly dim, spotlights are highlighting the host and the bidders who raise their notes.
Looks like the light will highlight the bidder who raises their notes, so they'll know the one who raises their notes immediately.

In case there are several people who raise their notes, they'll highlight them from the fastest one in turn.

『14 gold coins』
『....Since no one bids anymore, it's a successful bid. The winner of [Farsight Scope] is number 921!』

Rounds of applause are echoing in the hall once the host declared a successful bid.
The sound don't match the moving hands, so it's probably sound effects from some magic tool.

It seems they don't announce the bidder's name but their number.
Rather than for avoiding needless confusion, it's for hiding the bidder's identity no doubt.
By the way, my bidder number is number three. It's probably because I'm here as a delegate of Duke Mitsukuni house.

Still, I don't know whether it's because the bidders are mainly lower nobles or military men, but the winning bids are all only at 30% of the market price.
The people in this hall are probably aiming for the [Blessing Orbs].
Looks like I have a lot of rivals.

There were some interesting magic tools that were exhibited, but I wait for the [Blessing Orbs] auction without attempting an affair.

"Kuro-sama, please calm down. You don't have to be so worried, we will absolutely win the bid."

The manager who's sitting beside me persuades me while warmly gazing like a kind mother.
So I really shouldn't have let out, "Gununu" sound, or maybe staring hard at the noble seat restraint restlessly was bad... no, it has to be because I'm unconsciously tapping my foot....

I cough once, and then reply the manager with a voice full of dignity.

"There is no need to worry. I am calm."
"Yes, of course."

The manager nods and then presents me with a glass of carbonated fruit water.
I'm bothered with her kind mother-like expression, but this is just right as I feel thirsty.

I gulp it and then refreshing sensation slides down my throat.

"Another glass please."
"Yes."

After drinking the second glass, I feel calmed down.
Looks like I was a bit too eager.

I have to calm down until the real thing.

◇

And then, the long-awaited [Blessing Orbs]'s turn came.
This time there are eight orbs that are going to be displayed, they are our [Water Magic], [Paralyze Resistance], Jeril's [Light Magic], [Chant] and other people's [Transport], [Great Sword], [Arithmetic], and [Horticulture].

The plan should have been that the less interesting items are to be exhibited first, but it seems the management side are worried the bids would be sombre.
They feature the highlight, [Light Magic] right from the outset.

It seems they're right on the money--.

『150 gold coins!』
『153 gold coins!』
『160 gold coins!』

--The price rises rapidly.

"The rise is worse than I thought...."

The manager beside me tilts her head in puzzlement.
That reminds me, I've heard from the guildmaster and Jeril in Labyrinth City that, "It was bid for 3000 gold coins 200 years ago.", so this might be lacking.

『...920...gold coins!』
『930 gold coins!』
『...931...gold coins!』

The price gradually rises, but the end isn't quite in sight yet.
The competition from people from distinguished military families and upper nobles are fierce, maybe because possessing [Light Magic] skill is one of the requirements for entering Holy Knight.
I feel strong-will wanting to win no matter what.

I've also employed a proxy as Satou, but he was dropped off quickly since the upper limit was 500 gold coins.

Leaving that aside, if this keeps up--.

"It's getting prolonged more than we thought isn't it. If this keeps up, it'd be the break time before all the orbs are finished being exhibited."

That's bad...but if I intervened here, there might be other nobles who went after the important [Chant Orb] instead. I want to prevent that from happening.

After about 45 minutes, the [Light Magic] was finally sold for 1096 gold coins.
The man is wearing a mask but that's probably Duke Oyugock.

After that, it was quick.

--[Great Sword], 12 gold coins.
--[Arithmetic], 31 gold coins.
--[Horticulture], 7 gold coins.
--[Transport], 5 gold coins.

It seems orbs that have weak demands are cheap.
And the remainders are [Chant], [Water Magic], and [Paralyze Resistance].

『Then continuing on, after a fierce fight between the [Floormaster, Flame Snake] of the labyrinth's middle layer and the corps led by the Mithril explorer party, [Lion's Roar]--』

The prologue is too long!
Shut up and let me bid already!

"Kuro-sama--"

The manager puts her white hands on top of mine and whispers.

Not good, not good. I have to be cool.

『--Then let the bid begin.』

I quickly raise my note, however the spotlight isn't highlighting me, but a lower noble in the hall.

There are more than six notes raised when I look around the hall.

Looks like [Chant Orb] is really popular.
It seems there are a lot of people who are stumped at that impossibly hard spell chanting.

The usherette tells me that I'm the fifth.
Apparently, in case of simultaneous note-raises like this, the spotlight will highlight the notes in turn.

Now then, leaving that apart.

The first lower noble announces with tension in his voice.

『10 gold coins!』

--I wait and see.

The spotlight highlights the proxies of the lower nobles one after another.

『11 gold coins!』
『12 gold coins!』
『12 gold coins and 1 silver coin!』

--They play around too much.

"Kuro-sama, please."
"Umu--"

I receive the mic and pause a bit.

First, it's the skirmish.
I'll cut the mob, leaving only the serious opponents.

『100 gold coins』

I calmly said so, and turned my sight toward the one who's going to bid after me in the noble seats.
I wait for the noble of lineage, some Earl or something, to state his bid--.

He's having a long deliberation, perhaps for ascertaining my move.

Looks like he's quite capable.

He's not lacking as an opponent.

And then, voices come out of the hall's speaker.

『The winner of [Chant Orb] is number 3.』

--eh?

"Congratulations, Kuro-sama."

I can hear the manager congratulating me and applauses in the hall.

No but, most of the 300.000 gold coins still remain though....

I feel somewhat downhearted, so I bid and won [Water Magic] and [Paralyze Resistance] for childish prices.
I remembered after having won it that the [Water Magic] and [Paralyze Resistance] orbs were the items we brought from the labyrinth.

◇

"Kuro-sama, is there anything wrong?"

When we're walking to the place to get the items, it seems my dissatisfied mood leaks out, the manager asks worryingly.

"No, it's just that I thought the『Chant Orb』was too cheap considering the winning bid in the past.
"When you say it like that, certainly."

According to the history, [Chant Orb] was won at around 200-400 gold coins.
The answer to that is brought by the usherette who's guiding us.

"That's because of the note raised by your proxy."
"Note?"

She consented when I asked again.

If I'm not mistaken, the color of the note differs depending on the potential amount.

My upper limit was 10.000, so the other people who saw that probably pulled back.

We enter the place to get the item that's strictly protected by high level knights.

The proxy of Duke Oyugock has entered first, they're confirming the payment.
I'm guided to a different table, and then I take out a bag of gold coins for the payment.

--One of the luminous points disappears.

I promptly open the marker list on the map.

--Blast it!

"Ku-Kuro-sama?"

Looks like I unconsciously used [Coercion] skill, the surrounding people have solidified with blue faces.

"The orb has been stolen. I will chase the criminal. Manager, finish the winning bid procedure."
"I-I understand."

After confirming the manager's reply, I leave that place.

◇

The one who steals the orb is a [Phantom Thief].
My [Chant Orb] is in the thief's Item Box. It seems the other orbs have all been stolen too.

At first I thought it was the same phantom thief from before, but it was an old man with a cute un-phantom-thief-like name, Pipin.

Still, he's fast.
Even though it hasn't even been 10 seconds since he got outside, he's already several hundreds meter away.

I understand the reason why he's strangely fast after chasing him with Flash Drive.

--It's a short-distance teleport.

That's a rare gift, but I won't let him escape!

I move in front of Pipin with Unit Arrangement.

"A pursuer huh!"

Pipin heads toward the downtown with short-distance teleport.
Apparently, he can jumps 300 meters in one go.

"I-impossible!"

Pipin continues doing short-distance teleports even while panicking.

Pipin stops running away after five teleportations.
Looking at his remaining MP, he can only jump for one more.

We're standing on a four-story apartment building, but it seems the buildings around here are deserted, there isn't any common people here.

"What's the matter? Are we done playing tag?"

Hearing me speaking like I've cornered a rat, Pipin grins and laughs.
He's probably anticipating the red luminous lights lurking in the surrounding buildings and whatever that makes my [Trap Discovery] reacting since a while ago.

"--Yep, that's right, it's over."

Birdlime balls are raining toward [The place where I was] from the surrounding, and the pitfall and net trap are activated.
Unexpectedly, they're all non-lethal traps.

"Kukuku, there's no way you can escape unless you can teleport like me."
"That seems to be the case."

I agree with the triumphant phantom thief from behind him.

"W-what!"

Pipin does the last teleport while getting surprised.
He's not giving up easily, but this is the last.

◇

There are two figures of people at the place where I move with Unit Arrangement.
Beside Pipin who's standing with his back facing here, the other phantom thief who was disguising as Satou the other day, [Shararuruun], is also standing.

I see, so they were planning to meet here.

It'll be troublesome if they diverge.
Let's settle it quickly.

"W-wait! Please wait."

Shararuruun waved her hand in panic, stopping me when I was going to use Ground Shrink.
Pipin is keeping his silent.

Shararuruun throws a velvet bag to me.

The radar shows the luminous point of a marked item approaching me along with the bag's trajectory.

I take it and put it into the storage.
Now it'll be fine even if we talk carefreely.

Apparently, Pipin is unconscious.

"What are you planning?"
"What? Haven't you heard from Miss Elterina?"

To my question, Shararuruun looked puzzled and said an unknown name.

--Elterina?

Ah, the manager's name huh.

When I look better, Shararuruun's affiliation is [Echigoya Firm].

"Right, you were the one who found my little brother right? Thank you. Thanks to you, I could cut my tie with those bastards."

Fumu, it's about the missing person that the manager asked recently huh.

"That's splendid. I'll leave it to you to take the man to the authority."
"Understood. By the way, what do you want me to do with the items inside his Item Box?"
"I'll entrust it to you."
"Then, I'll use『Forced Storage Opening』and give them to Echigoya Firm."

She tells me so, and then Shararuruun goes along the roof while shouldering Pipin.
I see, I was wondering how she could take out the [Orb] from the Item Box, but it seems there's a skill to forcefully open an Item Box. I'll ask her to teach me later.

After neutralizing Pipin's companions with [Remote Stuns], I fire three Firework magic to the sky in order to alert the guards.
I'll leave it to the guards to clean up the small fries.

◇

I take out the [Chant Orb] from Storage.

Fufufufufu---.

I stare at that gallant figure while suppressing my laughter.
It finally comes into my hands.

I've confirmed with the manager using [Telephone] magic that the payment has been completed.

There is nothing that holds me back anymore.
Flooded with emotion, I hold the [Chant Orb] high toward the sky.
The orb glitters from the light of the sun.

Come now! With this I can freely use any magic!

13-28. Orb

The boy pulls back the orb that he has raised up toward the sky.

"I see.... I wanted my memories erased myself."

The moment the boy saw the sun light reflected on the orb, the locked memory played back in the boy's mind like a revolving lantern.

--The memories from the former world.

--The memories when he was summoned during a ritual of a small kingdom.

--A beautiful woman who transcended humans.

--And then the people who rescued him who was kidnapped under the pretext of 'summoning'.

"I remember...."

The boy grips his other hand not holding the orb hard enough to spill blood.

"I wanted to try living as a person of this world, and see if I would still think the same like before my memory was sealed...huh."

The boy sighs once to himself for his roundabout way of sealing his own memory.

And then, this time he chooses to use the orb.

"To gain power from this orb, I should do it like this."

The boys understands how to use the orb just by flowing it with his magic power; he swallows it.
The boy's throat moves, and then the power of blessings dwells in the boy before the orb could reach his stomachs.

"■■■ Breeze"

The breeze of life magic shakes the boy's hair.

"Kukkukku, this is magic--"

The current boy can use any magic.
Because he can browse all magic like turning a dictionary.

"--For I am the king who rules over magic."

The boy smiles with his mouth looking like the shape of a down crescent moon.

And then a cataclysm happens as if responding to that smile.

--Flame envelops the world.

Beyond the horizon, flame raises toward the void sky as if blown from the earth.
That's happening on 360 degree direction, there are walls of flame everywhere you see.

"Looks like the world welcomes its end---"

The boy laughs loudly with his hands reaching out to the sky.

As if waiting for his laughter to end, the flame walls that have surrounded the world abruptly disappears.
Without even questioning the unknown walls of flame, the boy mutters to himself.

"A king who's alone doesn't look good.... Right, I'll summon a servant."

By just thinking that, a magic circle that emits violet light appears on the ground.
Two circles float to mid-air, then the upper circle projects a light cylinder.
Black stains are created inside the cylinder, and then it produces a grotesque figure before long.

The figure pushes down the joint cemetery stone monuments to where the boy stands, one after another.

『Your highness, the greater demon [Black Three] has come before your presence, I am blissful.』

The boy knits his brow toward the black greater demon that's appeared.

"I am the king. Call me majesty."
『As you wish, your majesty. I consent.』

Accompanied by the greater demon, the boy who's smiling harder feels an intense vertigo.

"....Guh, w-what?"
『A human body is brittle, it cannot endure the recoil from the summoning, so is my humble opinion.』

Just as the greater demon had said, the boy's body was assailed by the recoil of the forbidden magic used to summon a greater demon and the sudden shortage of magic power.

"If it's weak, then I can just remodel it, yes, remodel it stronger."

As if waiting for the boy's mutter, the power of magic without chanting transforms the boy's body with crackling sound.

--The bones lengthen, the muscles increase, the figure turns into that of an adult.

"Gugagagaga"

The boy screams with his mouth.
The physical growth stops when he's become a two-meter tall big figure.
However, the transformation isn't stopping.

--A thin violet-colored horn appears on his forehead, and his hair lengthens until the waist.

"Haa, haa, haa"

Repeating short panting, the boy's hair is shining silver, his bangs is dyed in violet color.
The boy clicks his fingers once, and then clothes and mantles appear out of thin air, wrapping the boy's body.

Someone calls to the boy who's dumbfounded with the transformation of his body.

『What a magnificent figure zamasu. With this, his majesty『Onifolk King』will be delighted too zamasu.』
"So it's you--"

The boy looks at the source of the voice.
There are the green demon in its 30-meter long green dragon mock body, and its lower demon subordinates.

『Please pardon me to be in the form that once bared its fang to the king. I have brought an item for congratulating your highness zamasu.』

Boom, the ground shakes, and then on its place is a lump of magic crystal pillar that has the effect of MP recovery.
It's not an item that can be gotten easily even for a senior greater demon.

"That is?"
『It's an item for recovering magic power called magic crystal pillar zamasu.』
"I see, hand it over."

The boy uses [Magic Hand] magic to move the magic crystal pillar.
The moment he touches it, the boy's magic power that was about to run out is recovered in a flash.

"This is magnificent."
『I am extremely delighted to see that it is to your highness's liking zamasu.』
"Call me majesty."
『Understood zamasu--』

Even though the green demon is using polite speech toward the boy, perhaps his loyalty doesn't lie to the boy.

The green demon suddenly raises its dragon's neck toward a section of the sky and scowls

at it.

『--It seems an annoying person has noticed us zamasu. Leave it to me zamasu.』

After saying that the green demon kicks the ground and soars to the sky.

The lower demons that had accompanied the green demon also disappeared without even leaving a shadow just like when they appeared.
They're probably familiars for shuttle use.

◇

『Your majesty's order, I await.』
"Right. First I'll punish the kidnappers--"

The boy orders the greater demon to bring one of the people of the kingdom that kidnapped him.
Ignoring the greater demon that showed its displeasure by keeping silent, the boy talks to himself in delirium.

"What kind of punishments should I do? Ordinary punishments are not good. Making that beautiful princess cry tears of fear and regret is good....Right. I have a good plan...."

The boy chuckles to his own good idea.
Before long, the greater demon returned while carrying an unconscious girl.

"Wake up."

Using mind magic chantlessly, he wakes the girl--Princess Menea up.

"He-here is? ....Demons!"

Princess Menea immediately stands guard, and then throws a magic tool for emergency summon to the ground.
A mist-like dog shrouded in white mist growls toward the boy and the greater demon.

"Futile."

The boy clicks his fingers, and then the white mist dog disappears into the air with a whimper.

"...N-no way....Chantless magic."

Princess Menea speaks with trembling voice.
The girl is probably aware.

--An opponent that can use chantless magic, that is.

"....Demon lord."

Princess Menea shrinks back in fear.

"What's wrong? Don't you usually come to me yourself?"

The boy clicks his fingers, and then ivy which grow from the ground restrain Princess Menea and lift her up.

"Do not worry, princess of the kingdom of sinners. I will not kill you immediately."

The boy swings his arm, and then the thick trees are parted to the sides, revealing the royal castle and the big sakura tree beyond.

"First, I who was summoned by you bastards will destroy the capital of a foreign kingdom. Witness the slaughter of your friends and the innocent people, and cry."

Princess Menea who's being scowled by the mad boy is trembling to the point of losing her consciousness.
Nay, every time she's going to faint, she's forcefully woken up with the boy's magic.

"Once it's over, I'll bring your head to Rumooku Kingdom and abduct that beautiful sister of the king."

The boy laughs with a slight admiration among his insanity.

"....Yuriko-sama is already....."

Princess Menea's mutter never reach the boy.

"First, I'll start with that hateful sakura tree."

Princess Menea sees the visage of a person before the grotesque transformation from the boy's face.

"....Y-you are!"

Taking no notice of the girl, the boy starts a spell chant since the first [Breeze].
Enormous magic power is gathering to the boy, that spell chant forms a shape.

The sky above the royal castle is split, the tip of a gigantic meteorite shows itself up.

"Fuhahahahaha, look at my meteor! This is power--"

The boy who was going to laugh loudly with spread arms turns toward Princess Menea.

"--What are you doing?"

Before the boy's eyes, a plump boy is struggling to untie Princess Menea from the ivy.
The boy clicks his fingers, and then the ivy that binds Princess Menea flings the plump boy away.

"Uwaaaa"
"Souya-dono!"

The boy rolls on the cemetery while repeatedly raising dust.

The boy recognizes the plump Souya boy, but right now he's an existence that's no different than a garbage, he loses interest after glancing at him once.
The boy clicks his fingers, and then a bundle of fireballs appear.

"Clown begone."

The fireballs explode above the boy, the flame wrap the boy's figure.

There isn't any trace of the charred remain of the boy once the flame disappear.

"Hmph, vaporized without leaving a bone huh..."

Even though he's a bit puzzled, the boy seems to think of it as of little significance, he turns his concern toward the meteorite creation.
The gigantic meteorite is giving a roaring sound while being created in the sky, however only 50% of it has appeared.
The boy suddenly looks around, the greater demon scowls at a section of the cemetery.

"--As expected of a greater demon, you're not leaving any opening."

A lone swordsman appears from behind the grove.

"Your majesty, please leave cleaning up the small fry too me. I am industrious."
"Small fry huh.... Been a while since I was called that. Second seat of Shiga Eight Sword, Heim the『Weed』, coming!"

He rushes with Flickering Movement, the greater demon also accelerates and counterattacks while leaving black afterimage.
The demon blocks the great swords with its claw, and then Heim kicks the counterattacking claw away.
Heim is freely wielding the great sword that should've been heavy and slow, he deals with the greater demon's claw by kicking its tail.

"Fushururuu, you're good human! I am delighted."
"I'd have died from the first attack if I didn't use the forbidden acceleration drug..."

The greater demon breathes roughly, taking a charging posture with both its claws on the ground.
In order to meet it, Heim takes an upper stance with the great sword.

"Heim-sama! The one who creates that meteorite is that silver-haired demon lord!"

Princess Menea screams so to Heim, but the greater demon's protection is firm, it seems

Heim can't approach the boy.
When the gigantic meteorite finally starts its fall, the boy speaks to himself while his eyes are chasing it.

"Now, it's the beginning of the end--"

◇

"Aaa! The big sakura tree is--"

Princess Menea's scream resounds throughout the cemetery.

And then, the moment the meteorite is going to touch the big sakura tree, the space over there looks like it's split and then the meteorite disappears.

"I-Impossible!"

There's no one who responds to the boy's surprise.

The moment the meteorite disappears completely, the ground of the royal capital shakes.
The lone scream of Princess Menea is echoing throughout the cemetery.

"Assistance~?"
"Assistance for assistant nanodesu!"

Little swordsmen wrapped in golden sparkle break into the place.

"Worthy rivals! I welcome."

The dogfolk swordsman--Pochi assaults the greater demon while leaving blue glow behind.
The greater demon's claws wrapped in red light clash with the small holy sword, scattering red and blue sparks.

The catfolk swordsman--Tama who's rushing from the side is counterattacked by the demon's tail.
The tail quickly cuts down the swordsman's stomach, a little figure falls on the cemetery.

--However, the thing that's fallen down is a log wrapped in a pink mantle.

"Utsusemi~?"Cast-off cicada shell.

Slipping off before anyone knew it, the cat ninja Tama releases Princess Menea, and then takes her away to the edge of the cemetery.

Souya boy who should have lost his life in flames is over there too.
His survival is due to cat ninja Tama's secret action.

"Impertinent, who are you bastards!"

As if waiting for the boy to ask their identity, several girls in golden armors land on the cemetery.

"Isn't it obvious! We're the allies of justice!"

A girl in golden dress armor whose violet hair is trailing behind--Arisa laughs cheerfully.

"Come now! Let the match be--huh? Why are you here?"

Arisa is shaken when she perceives the former visage of the grown-up boy.

"W-why are you... Answer me!"

The boy throws his mantle, and then he scowls at Arisa with a smug face.

"You servant, you're being haughty toward the one who rules over magic, the omnipotent king, me!"

The boy rebukes Arisa with all his dignity.
However, without being daunted by it, Arisa asks another question.

"Answer me, you who should have been a hero, why?!"
"I don't care about the me whose memory was sealed."

The boy clicks his fingers, several force spears appear attacking Arisa.

"Useless useless useless, so I declare."

A beautiful woman wrapped in golden armor--Nana amasses impregnable defensive wall before Arisa.
The force spears disappear fruitlessly the moment they touch the defensive wall.

"Are you obstructing me, small fries!"

Right at then, boom, a grotesque figure wrapped in green scales is dropped.

"Thank you for the wait, it's the appearance of the star performer! Hero Nanashi Second, coming!"

A woman protected by 13 holy swords glowing blue is taking a victory pose on top of the green dragon.

"Ara~? Your look sure has really changed."

Mito tilts her head when she sees the boy's face.

"H-hey, Mito, you're late."
"Real sorry. This green greater demon was tenacious you see."

When Mito shrugs her shoulders, the greater demon who's taken the form of a green dragon disappears like a mist.
It probably couldn't maintain the mock body (avatar).

"Now then, let's fight."
"Wait a minute. That guy is--"
"I know. However, I'm a hero, he's a demon lord. That's a reason enough to fight."

Mito holds back Arisa who's still trying to stop the boy.

"Now then, let's go--"

She twirls the holy wand taken out of her Inventory once, and then glares at the boy.

"--Demon Lord Shin!"

Thus the curtain opens for the fight between a demon lord and a hero--.

1. Cast-off cicada shell.

13-29. Behind the Orbs (1)

Mito

"Nothing to do at all~"

Sitting down on top of a water tower in the downtown, I look down below.
Ichirou-nii picked me up this morning, so I've been watching over the orphanage where Shin-kun is, but there's really nothing happening.

The green demon that came to the Royal Capital last night didn't get in touch with Shin-kun either, so I'm thinking that this child might not be related to the recent series of events.

--Oops, found a contact!

Some evil-looking men approach Shin-kun and the children of the orphanages who have come to a well to draw water.

I can't hear them.... I'll try using [Hearing Boost] magic.

"--Transport these."
"And the reward?"
"I'll give you a meal once you've finished transporting it. That's fine with you right?"
"I want something that can be brought back to the orphanage."

Arara, isn't he a good child. No wonder Ichirou-nii would meddle.

It seems they're reached an agreement, Shin-kun leaves the children to draw water and then follows the men.
I put on the body-hiding mantle, and chase after them by jumping on the roofs.

"I should just transport this right?"
"Yeah, bring it to the warehouse pass the cemetery. You've gone there before, so you know right?"

Shin-kun and several children of the same age are pulling a cart.
The men who gave them the job are from a gray firm called [Stolen Goods Fox]. As the name suggest, they're probably dealing with stolen goods.

Without being called out by the guards, Shin-kun and the others transported the cart to the cemetery just before the destination.
And there, three men in violet priest clothes are blocking their way.

There is no priest clothes in violet color.
But there were people like them when I was working as a king.

--Demon god believers, [Complete Equality].

I checked them with Appraisal skill, but they're not those guys.
Looks like they're a part of a carefree occult club called [Wind of Liberty] that I've heard from Ichirou-nii before.

But, there's something strange. The priests' states are strange. When I check further, they're in the state of [Suggestion].

"Whaat? Oy, priests? You're in the way, can you get out of the road?"

One of the boys who are transporting the goods threatened the three priests.

"Gang of thieves. Know that there is an item that we need to offer to his majesty inside that cart."
"Leave it here and go away."
"If you do, we will not take your lives."

The three announce that indifferently, the boys are drawing their swords, enraged.

"Don't joke around! We'll be held responsible if we abandon the cart. Come if you don't value your life!"
"Very well."

Sneering at that childish threat, the priests pull out rapiers.

Fu~mu, it'll be problematic if Shin-kun is hurt, I'll try asking what those guys want.
I jump out of the grove, and land before the men.

I ward off the swinging rapier with a broom, and block the thrusting rapier with a small shield of [Auto Defense].

"Who are you!"
"Hi~ I'm a passing beau~ty"

The men are grimacing to my smile, and the boys look weary.
These are some very rude guys. I'd like to let them drink some dirt from Ichirou-nii's fingernail.[1]

"That move--woman! You must be Ryouna the『Mower』of Shiga Eight Swords!"
"To think that they'd smell out our plan this fast!"
"We can't hesitate anymore."

The priests jump back and put down their rapiers.

"Will you surrender?"

They ignored me even though I kindly suggested it.
The three priests took something red from their chests, put it on their foreheads, and then say something simultaneously.

"""O Short Horn, feed upon our desire to grant us violent power"""

Together with the priests' shouts, something break through their priests' clothes, and then they change into gorilla-like lesser demons.

"You guys, escape!"

As I order them, the boys try to run away while desperately pulling the cart.

"Just dump the luggage!"

--GRROUWWWN.

As if interrupting my warning, the gorillas wreck the surrounding with storm magic.
The cart is overturned, and the boys fall to the tombstones.

Good, Shin boy is alright.
The other children are getting up and running away in groups of two and three.

I pour magic power into the holy sword taken out from Inventory and recite the holy verse.

"<<DANCE>> Claiomh Solais, become 13 blades, dancing in the sky."

The holy swords turns the lower demons into black dust one after another.

I look around to find the wire puller who manipulated them while seeing the reliable holy swords on the corner of my vision.

--There.

A short beastfolk disappears into the thicket that surround the cemetery.

I'm worried about Shin boy and the luggage, but I'll chase that guy first.
I should've contracted a new familiar after waking up in the ruin.

Shin

What is this?

What?

What is this!

Just when some priests blocked my work transporting a cart, a strange aunty cut in, and in the end the people turned into monsters.

Isn't that strange?

It's too strange!

"Oy! Let's run! Stop dawdling!"

Jeje the Lizardfolk who's usually taciturn urges everyone.
I hurriedly begin to push back the cart.

"Just throw the luggage!"

The aunty shouted from behind, but we can't do that.
This portage work is a job from a crime guild.

If we break or steal the luggage, we'll be treated harsher than turning into slaves.

--GRROUWWWN.

Storm raged from behind, we're blown away together with the cart.

"D-demons!"
"Run!"

Everyone scrambles away.
I also desperately crawl below the overturned cart.

When I push some obstructing boxes, a statue of goddess falls out from the inside.
For some reason I can't get my eyes off it even though it's at a time like this.

The second storm rages on when my hand reaches out to that goddess statue.
I roll on the ground while holding the goddess statue.

I saw blue light swords pulled by the aunty turning the lesser demons into black dust.
The aunty shouts, "Wait!", and then she jumps out to the other side of the cemetery.

--Am I saved?

I feel something odd in my hand while feeling relieved.
The goddess statue has crumbled into sand.

A violet orb appeared from the inside.

I scoop the orb that's emitting ominous light from the interior, and hold it over the sunlight.

Arisa

--This is bad.

"I wonder how will Sir Pendragon interpret this formula."

Like so.

"This cake was made by Sir Pendragon right. He's really versatile isn't he."

Or so, Princess Shistina's reaction is bad.
Looking at her reaction and the flow, she's too much like a girl in love.

Thanks to that, the matter of [Nectar] or Hisui weren't talked about much, so we were saved though.
Geez, she's just too easy.

Perhaps our Master has the qualification as a first-rate flag architect?

That Master of ours had just contacted me with [Short Message] magic, telling that he had obtained the [Chant Orb] safely.
He probably mailed cause I wouldn't pick up [Telephone].

The writing style is so merry you wouldn't have thought it was the usual Master.
It's too frustrating that I can't preserve it.

At the end of that message, he wrote that in order to master the chant and to register magic into the magic column, he would go to, "A place where I wouldn't worry about human damage."
He's probably experimenting in the vast desert to the west of Labyrinth City Selbira.
My tension is rising just by imagining the spectacle.

Maybe I should cut the tea party short and go visit it with Mia.

Mia who looks like she'll vomit sugar seeing Shistina chattering fondly of Master, mutters, "Mwu?"
I can hear pitter-patter footsteps from the direction where she's looking at.

"Onee-sama!"

Loli princess Doris who jumped into the room hugs Shistina.
The attendants of Doris who are running after her from behind apologize for the rudeness in panic.

It seems courtesy is required if you're sister princesses of a large kingdom.

"That Hisui you see, even though she had gone back to her cage and ate her meal before I knew it yesterday, she's gone again just now!"
"How mysterious--"

The bird has drank Nectar after all, I wonder if she's gained some strange ability or something?

I have to report to Master and ask if we need to do something about it.
If possible, in the bed while we're huddling our faces together--guhehehe.

My delightful delusion is interrupted by pirupiru chirps.

"Hisuiiiii!"

Hisui who's appeared in the room before anyone knew pulls Doris's hair and dress, trying to take her somewhere.

"No! Stop it, Hisui!"

However, it seems Princess Doris doesn't understand it.
This time, she's flying around Shistina, doing her best to take her outside.

I'm bothered with Hisui's curious desperation.
Did she get an ability to detect disaster after drinking the Nectar?

"Nn, piruru, piru, piru."

When Mia mimicked Hisui's cry, Hisui chirped back, "pipirupirupiru" too.

"As expected of elf-sama, she understands bird's language!"

One of the maids speaks with admiration.
Mia continues to pirupiru with a composed face, but she's just playing around by mimicking the chirping.
If this were a manga, there would sweat marks on Mia's face, no doubt.

While also helping Mia, I'll go check the royal capital from the top of the big sakura tree.

"I'll be going to the washroom for a bit."

After telling so, I take Mia along into a private luxurious toilet.

"Master hasn't contacted us with anything so I think it's fine, but let's check out outside for a bit."
"Nn."

I can't teleport to a precise location without a carved seal board, so I teleport to the sky above the big sakura tree.
The sunlight is darkened even though it should be clear today.

"Arisa, above."
"Ugeh, the heck is thaaaaaat!"

After teleporting to the top of the big sakura tree and sitting down, I looked above urged by Mia, and screamed to the abnormal scene before my eyes.

"A rock?"

I see a huge rock trying to come out of a crack in the sky on top of the royal castle.

It's as big as the whole royal castle.

If that falls, there will be a lot of victims from the castle.

I immediately invoke [World Phone], but I can't connect to Master.
It's not blocked, the reaction feels like when Telephone magic can't reach a target that's too far away.

"Arisa."

--It can't be helped, let's decide quickly.

"Over Boost"

Violet glow is wrapping me.
I take the coolest looking pose, and then shout out the magic name with fighting spirit.

"『Gate』open!"

Riding on my spirit, the effect of Unique Skill is raised.

A teleport gate at the size that can swallow a private house is opened in the sky.
But it's too small to redirect that rock.

"Magic potion."

With fighting spirit, I gulp down the magic potion that Mia gives me.
It' super sweet. It's sweet enough my teeth feel like melting, but power is gushing forth.

Master's love recovers my magic power in a flash.

"Over Boost aaaand,『Gate』opeen!"

By overlapping the magic, the teleport gate widens.
Violet light coils the dimension rift, widening the teleport gate.

But, it's still a bit short.

The royal castle should be saved with just this much, but enormous damage will appear on the castle's surrounding.
The parking lot where Zena-tan and her friends are standing by and the guest house where Karina is should be in danger.

"Blood."

The capillary on my fingers have torn and blood are spurting out of it, maybe because I was repeatedly being forceful.
I'll say thanks later to Mia who wraps them with a handkerchief.

I drink the second magic potion, and use the Unique Skill for the third time today.

Over Boost.

The depth of my soul is screaming like creaking sounds.
A pain that's about three time more painful than wisdom teeth attacks my body.

I think Master warned me about it back then.
If you over-use Unique Skill, the vessel of your soul would break, and you'd fall into a demon lord.

--But, if I run away here, it'll be a disgrace as a woman!

I'll lose if I don't push myself here!

"Gooooooooooo!"

I put all of my magic power, and then the [Gate] widens even though it's destabilizing.
I can't control the teleport gate with my ability.

『Dryad! Lend us your power! The requester is Misanalia! A spirit user of Boruenan Forest possessing Spirit Eyes!』
『Okay~, the sakura tree will disappear if I don't help here.』

Mia shouted something in elf language, and then a pink-colored dryad appeared from the big sakura tree.

『Young lady, I'll connect your wand with the sakura tree to be an assist, do your best after that.』

I don't understand her words, but the control suddenly feels easier.
The [Gate] that was about to dissolve any moment became like a calm water surface.

And then, the huge rock finally falls from the sky.

No! The position is a bit bad.

--Funnu.

I fire myself up and shift the [Gate] to the site where the huge rock falls.
It seems my forehead's blood vessels have erupted, my view is dyed red.

However, it was worth overdoing!

The huge rock falls out of the [Gate] to the outskirt plain. Whenever the huge rock hits the ground, around magnitude 3 earthquake shakes the royal capital.
The huge rock falls just like that, splitting the mountain nearby, and then stops.

"Huu, this is thanks to Hisui. Putting us aside, if that child didn't inform us, the people of the royal castle wouldn't be saved."
"Arisa."

While drinking the magic potion that Mia gave me, I shift my gaze to the emergency alarm magic tool that's been ringing since awhile ago.
This is a tool to notify us when something is happening with our group.

The lamp indicating Liza is shining.

1. Japanese proverb, same meaning as 'take a leaf out of someone's book'.

13-30. Behind the Orbs (2)

Liza

"Fui~"
"I give nodesu."

Tama and Pochi who have been fighting Heim of Shiga Eight Swords plop down to the ground.

"E-err, Heim-dono--"

The teacher of knight school is trying to talk to Sir Heim, but being somewhat excited, he pays no attention to the teacher and turns toward me.

"What splendid talent. To be that skillful at those ages. Dame Kishreshgalza, are you the master of these girls?"
"No, these girls' masters are Master and the elves of Boruenan Village."

While feeling bad for the teacher, I answer Sir Heim's question.

"By Master you mean Viscount Pendragon isn't it.... I'd like to have a match with him once, but isn't he a magic swordsman? Isn't Dame Kishreshgalza more skilled in pure skill?"
"No, I cannot be compared to Master."

I'm confident that I've become slightly stronger, but Master's spearmanship is extraordinary. My ideal ultimate spearmanship is in there.

One day, I want to reach that stage.

"Fumu, I really should have a match--"

As if interrupting Sir Heim, screams break out from the school building.
The school building has been noisy since awhile ago, but this time the scream are echoing even though there are no cheers here.

"--What?! I'll go see it for a bit. Teacher Datz, evacuate with the students if you sense anything amiss."

After saying so, Sir Heim leaves for the scream at terrifying speed.

"Tama."
"Aye~?"
"Follow Sir Heim. If you find anything, return immediately to report."
"Aye aye sir~"

After getting my order, Tama disappears from the place.

Ninjutsu is quite a wonderful thing.

That reminds me, I wonder what was the fire wall beyond the royal capital that was burning during Pochi and Tama's fight.

Master might be fighting a newly appearing demon lord again.
I have to better myself to become an existence that Master can rely on.

Tama

Ninja runs.

Running in the shadow, byun byun.

Ah, it's He~m.

A monkey-like black demon person jumps, running away to the other side.
The demon person was carrying a pink-haired girl under its arm.

Enviable hair color, nyan.

Tama follows He~m, who runs after the demon, from behind.
A plump kid called Souya is also running after it desperately, but since he's slow, he's getting left behind gradually.

Do your best~ Tama cheers in her mind.
Tama can't talk, Tama is a ninja after all.

It seems the goal is the cemetery ahead. For now Tama is going back to inform Liza.

"I'm back~?"
"Good work. So, what is happening?"
"A demon kidnapped someone~"
"Kidnapping is bad nanodesu."
"Right.... Let's report to Master."

Liza operates a magic tool, clack-clack.
It's glittering, pretty.

"There is no response.... For now let's go ahead and confirm whether we can eliminate the demon."
"Aye aye sir~"
"Roger nanodesu."

Tama runs toward the cemetery together with Liza and Pochi.

Mito

"Let go! You human woman! Kicking this great Eneshiepet-sama who's connected by blood

to the nine founder clans of Weaselfolk, what rudeness!"
"Be quiet."

Catching the weasel who ran around from place to place took more time than I thought.
Even if I go back now, Shin-kun and his friends probably have carried the stolen goods to the warehouse.

I tie up the stubborn weasel, and decide to bring him to Echigoya Firm ahead.
Roaring noisily on the ground would trouble people, so I go to Echigoya Firm by jumping on roofs.

When I'm halfway to Echigoya Firm, flapping sounds from something like a flying gigantic bird is resounding in the royal capital.
It's near the cemetery from earlier.

"Oooooo!!"
"Mou, how noisy--"

While frowning at the weaselfolk who's tied like a bagworm making a ruckus, I turn to look at the place the weaselfolk is looking.

--Geh, an infant green dragon?

Its sight is locked on to me.

I throw the weasel on the roof and then run into the sky.
I don't have Sky Drive skill like Ichirou-nii, but there are a lot of force magic to create foothold I can use, so it's alright.
Fearing damage to the surrounding, I ran to the sky.

The infant dragon shoots out a green-colored breath.

I spread out the force magic [Giant Shield] urgently, blocking the breath.
As expected of dragon's breath. It's hard even with an advanced magic.

Right after I've finished enduring it, the green dragon's fangs approach.
I evade it with a paper-thin difference.

"A nostalgic face zamasu. I never thought that I'd meet a descendant of Hero Yamato zamasu."

Yuck, it's not a real dragon, but an avatar of the green demon huh.

Still, it's noisy with its zamasuzamasu like always.
I lead it to outside of the royal capital while evading its attacks.

Along the way, I saw the space on top of the royal castle split, and a huge rock appeared.

"Geh, Meteor?"

"That's the false king's magic zamasu. Let us have a nice fight while enjoying the destruction of royal capital zamasu!"

The green demon sneers at me who's surprised.

"Read the mood. I can't afford to fight you right now."

I have to do something fast.

"<<DANCE>> Claiomh Solais! Take care of Zamasu!"

I leave it to the holy sword Claiomh Solais to take care of the green demon's avatar, and then I head toward the royal castle myself.

I accelerate in the sky using force magic's [Counter Cube].
But, it's a bit too far. I won't make it like this.

Even if I didn't make it, the current king should be able to defend against it by using the city core's power properly.
The whimsical Sakura Dryad probably would help too.

--That's?!

An unexpected ending waited.
The huge lump of ruck was caught by a teleport gate, and got ejected outside the royal capital.

Humans should not be able to use that degree of magic.

If that was true, then it must have been with the help of a city core or god's fragments, you'd need absurdness to break through the limit of humans.
And then, I found the kid who was being rash on top of the sakura tree.

I land beside that kid.

"You're bloody all over! Hold on, I'll use recovery magic--"
"It's alright, Mito-tan. I've already drank recovery potion and blood-forming medicine. My body feels a bit light, but I should be able to move in no time."
"Leave the rest to me and Satou, you go get some rest."

Arisa shakes her head weakly to me.

"It's no good. I can't reach Master with『World Phone』. It seems he's in a place where magic can't reach."
"Then I'll do it myself. I'm still a leading hero of generation after all. I can do something about it as long as the opponent isn't a non-standard demon lord like the wild boar-head or the dog-head. I have the holy wand this time too."

It's an item I got from Ichirou-nii, not the wand that I used long ago, but the performance of

its magic manipulation precision and magic convergence efficacy are higher than the divine gift holy wand.
He said that it was a prototype from the time he was making a wand for himself, but with this wand, I should be able to fight against a greater demon easily even alone.

I hit the green demon that's shaken off the holy sword coming here with [Divine Hammer] magic.

It'd be troubling if it intruded during my fight with the demon lord.
I'll finish this guy off first before fighting the demon lord.

"I'll be going ahead, you should take a rest before Satou returns."

After telling so, I challenge the green demon in an air battle.

Arisa

Leaving Mito to handle the green greater demon, I, whose strength has recovered, am taken by Nana and Lulu to a spire overlooking the cemetery.

"Tell me about the situation--"

I tell about the thing I've heard from Liza and the others who are fighting in the cemetery from [Telephone] to everyone.
I tell them that a being that seems to be a demon lord has captured Princess Menea and Souya, and that Pochi, Tama and Heim of Shiga Eight Swords are fighting a black greater demon together.

I confirm that Tama has rescued Princess Menea from the top of the spire.
Alright, it's about time for our turn.

I ask Lulu and Mia to stay here, and teleport to the battlefield.
My new dress armor's defensive power has remarkably improved compared to the time of the sakuramochi demon's fight. It has higher defensive power than Nana during the floormaster fight.
I've also added space magic's [Dimension Reflection] too in addition.
Truly the invincible full armor magical girl Arisa-chan.

And then, the demon lord we're confronting in the battlefield is--

"Impertinent, who are you bastards!"
"Isn't it obvious! We're the allies of justice!"

While replying to the slightly weak-looking demon lord's question, we set up our battle formation in the cemetery.
It looks like we can defeat it since it's only at level 50.

"Come now! Let the match be--"

While setting my arrival pose, I learned the demon lord's name through [Persona Appraisal].

The demon's lord name is [Shin].
It's the name of the local hero.

His looks has changed, but Shin boy's visage certainly remains.

"Huh? Why are you here?"

The demon lord looks at me like looking at a garbage.

"W-why are you... Answer me!"
"You servant, you're being haughty toward the one who rules over magic, the omnipotent king, me!"
"Answer me, you who should have been a hero, why?!"
"I don't care about the me whose memory was sealed."

The boy puts down his mantle and then produces several force spears to attack me.

"Useless useless useless, so I declare."

Nana who's beside me blocks those.

"Are you obstructing me, small fries!"

As if interrupting the angry demon lord, a dragon wrapped in green colored scales falls down with a boom.

"Thank you for the wait, it's the appearance of the star performer! Hero Nanashi Second, coming!"

With 13 holy swords shining blue floating around her, Mito is taking a victory pose on top of the green dragon.

"Ara~? Your look sure has really changed."

Mito inclines her head when she sees Demon Lord Shin's face.

"H-hey, Mito, you're late."
"Real sorry. This green greater demon was tenacious you see."

Mito shrugs her shoulders and then the greater demon in the shape of a green dragon disappears like a mist.
It probably couldn't maintain the mock body (avatar).

"Now then, let's fight."

Mito scowls at Demon Lord Shin and declares so.

"Wait a minute. That guy is--"
"I know. However, I'm a hero, he's a demon lord. That's a reason enough to fight."

I try to stop her in a hurry, but Mito doesn't pay any heed.

"Now then, let's go Demon Lord Shin!"
"I said wait--"

Still trying to stop her, I stop Mito who's raised an arm.

"Give it up Arisa. There's no person that can return once they've become a demon lord. They can go back to the ring of reincarnation if their soul vessel hasn't been completely broken. The only salvation is to pluck their life when they're still in the border of humanity, before going mad."

Mito speaks while staring at Shin.
Bitterness seems to be hidden deep within that voice.

Still, you'd be out of the samsara if the vessel got broken huh.
For the sake of being lovey-dovey with Master even in the next life, I have to refrain from overdoing it like earlier.

"Is there any meaning dying as an ordinary man. Men have to aim for the top."
"Even if that's from a given power?"
"I am the master of that power. Even if it's a power given by that shitty father, I'm the one who decide how to use it."

--Father? Who is he talking about?

That question appears in my mind while Mito and Demon Lord Shin are having a dialogue.

"Is that so.... We're in parallel lines further than this. I'll end it in a blow that won't hurt. Divine Javelin."

15 huge force spears appear around Mito.
Detailed magic circles are being engraved on the telephone pole-sized spears over and over.

And then, the 13 holy sword Claimh Solais's splits float in line with them.

"Hmph, a hero centered around magic usage huh--You've picked the wrong opponent."

When Demon Lord Shin clicks his fingers, Mito's magic disappears, and the holy sword Claiomh Solais that was floating in mid-air falls down to the ground.
At the same time, the defensive walls that surrounded our armor also disappeared.

Fortunately, the circulating magic power in the armor themselves haven't disappeared.

Liza who's fighting the black greater demon shot a magic edge cannon, but it disappeared in the middle of the way.

"No way, annulling magic with no regard to the level difference..."
"Fuhahahaha, any kind of magic is under my control for I am the one who rules over magic."

Demon Lord Shin laughs loudly to the shocked Mito.
Shin's unique skill is just one, the name is [Master Wizard].

Well, I've assumed as much.
I send a hand signal to Lulu at the spire.

Demon Lord Shin is blown off from the flank.
Slightly later, the sound of a bullet arrives in the cemetery.

--Nice, sniper!

My older sister has stylish skill.

"T-to think you're attacking from afar.... As expected of the same kind of people as father."

Shin who's lost one of his arm stands up while violet blood is spilling from his wound.

"This much is nothing."

An arm grows from his shoulder.
A second bullet attacks Shin, but his defensive magic protects him from that.

It seems he can use magic even though we can't.
What cheat!

"Eyesore."

Shin clicks his fingers, and then the spire where Lulu and Mia are collapses with a roaring sound.
It's alright, Lulu and Mia should have ridden Garuda that Mia's created to the base.

"Your Majesty, I am not useful, I apologize."

The black demon that's been stabbed by Liza's dragon spear crumbles into dust.
Pochi and Tama seem fine, but Sir Heim has wounds all over his body, looking like he'll die.

"I don't mind. That means I just have to summon more."

Summoning magic circles appear one after another beside Shin, black demons are appearing from them.

『Your highness, greater demon [Black Four] to your presence. I am deeply moved.』
『Your highness, greater demon [Black Five] to your presence. I rejoice.』
『Your highness, greater demon [Black Six] to your presence--』

In total there are 16 of them.

D-don't tell me.... A-all of them are greater demons?

"Pinch~?"
"T-this is an adversity nanodesu. This is bad nanodesu!"

Tama and Pochi were exchanging those words while drinking stamina and magic power recovery potion alternatively.
Pochi is flapping around in panic, but Tama looks like she's composed somehow.

"You two, let's decrease their number with the first attack. Withdraw at full speed once the combo attack is over."
"Aye aye sir~"
"Ro-roger nanodesu."

Liza readies her dragon spear, and orders Tama and Pochi with a face that looks like she's prepared to die.

"Leave this to me, you girls run."

Mito tells us so looking like she doesn't have any leeway.
But, I don't agree to that.

"We can't do that. I won't be able to face Master if we leave Mito-tan to cover our rear and escape."
"That's my line."

Besides, magic has been sealed, and I can't use teleport after all.
I stand beside Mito who's picked up the holy sword from the ground.

I glare at Demon Lord Shin who's lording over us with a composed face.
I'll show you the rash joke items I've loaded in the dress armor together with Master in bad taste.

In the corner of my view, I saw Tama's ears twitching, and then she looked up at the sky.

--What's in the sky?

"Don't worry be happy~"
"Keseran pasaran nanodesu."

Matching the two's muttering, heroic music begins to resound in the battlefield.
It's Wagner's [Ride of the Valkyries] played by Mia.

When I look at the source of the music, I see Mia playing a musical instrument on top of a tree beyond the cemetery while looking up at the sky.
Garuda probably got rolled up in the magic purge and disappeared.

"To play the music for your own funeral, how resolute. In light of that spirit, I'll kill you in

one blow without suffering--"

Demon Lord Shin raises his arm.

In the next moment, cold air with ozone-like odor sweep over the cemetery.
Kuh, this is demon lord's attack--

The white fog that blocked my view disappears in an instant.

--He?

Before my eyes, there are the figures of the demon lord and the greater demons locked up in transparent glass-like pillars.

And then--.

"I'm back, is anyone hurt?"

Master who's landed on top of the demon lord's icicle is waving his hands with a carefree smile.

【Keseran Pasaran】
Kesaran Pasaran is a fluffy white ball UMA, but the words are a bit different.
Arisa the commentator didn't do her job, so it's unknown whether Pochi misspoke the text.

13-31. Demon Lord Shin

Satou's here. I feel that there have been less adults who scold their children compared to when I was a child. I wonder how are children who aren't scolded when they did bad things going to learn the society moral.

◇

"Wlcome~"
"Welcome back nanodesu!"

Tama and Pochi jumped to me, so I quickly equip the mask, stop them with both my arms and then we descend to the ground together.
It seems these two saw me when I had teleported back in the sky.
Mia also played a BGM with my arrival, she must have found me from the spirit light.

Arisa runs as if rolling toward us who have landed on the ground.

"Mou, where have you been! I couldn't reach you even with『World Phone』!"
"Sorry, sorry. I was getting rid of a space kaiju in the void sky."

Arisa's telephone probably didn't reach me because of the effect of the space magic's [Planet Guard] that I used to protect the earth and the world's tree from the wave of after-effect from my attack magic.
It's a version of [City Guard] spell I found in the forbidden library during my catalog search that I half-jokingly remodeled.
I didn't think that it would have its turn when I remodeled it, but I'm glad that I made it.

Putting that aside, since Liza and Nana are rushing here, I turn to them.

"Master, thank you for your rescue."
"Master, is it a result of the new magic chant, so I ask."
"That's right. Look, ■■■ Breeze."

I hand Tama and Pochi over to Liza, and demonstrate a chant to Nana.
Lulu and Mia who are left alone on the grove beyond are waving their hands, so I pick them up with [Magic Hand].

"Eh? Wasn't there something strange just now? How did the chant succeed with that."

Arisa found some fault in my chant.
Certainly, I do feel that the intonation isn't elegant, but the magic properly activates and gets listed in the magic column, so it's fine right.
Demanding everything to be perfect is not good.

"W-wait. Rather than that, why are you able to use magic in the magic void space?"

Hikaru asked some strange question.
Come to think of it, I feel that the effect of [Seal Binding Ice Coffin (Shield Coffin)] earlier was a bit lower.

I try creating some magic arrows, and then they begin to break down after several seconds.
After confirming the demon lord's unique skill, I found the reason why Mito couldn't defeat the demon lord.

Apparently, it has a Unique Skill with bad affinity for Hikaru who's specializing in magic battle.

--Huh?

I noticed something unusual when I saw the demon lord's name as I was checking its stats.

"Isn't this Shin boy! Why did a hero like him turn into demon lord?"
"That, you see~ We don't know either."

Both Arisa and Hikaru shake their heads to my question.

Shin boy's title has changed into [Demon Lord], his [Hero] title has become a hidden title.
There are other hidden titles too, [Artificial Demon Lord], [False King].
I can somehow guess that there's something in his body from these titles.

I'll pay no mind to his level turning into 50 from a single-digit number.

"....Two hero Nanashi?"

Looking at the voice caught with my Attentive Ears skill, I see the dying Heim of Shiga Eight Swords lifting his head.
For some reason, Princess Menea and Souya boy who are unconscious are lying near him.

I don't understand the situation, but I make him sleep with [Anesthetic Sleep] magic, and heal his wounds with healing magic.

"Then, I'll ask Shin-kun his situation for a bit. It'll be bad if any damage happen here in the Royal Capital, so I'll be going to the desert."

Before that, I'll defeat the greater demons.
I thought of using them for our girls' power-leveling, but we can find as many strong monsters as we like, so there's no need for some misplaced inclination here.

I invoke the forbidden spell of destruction magic [Divine Ash], turning a demon together with the shield coffin into black dust.

"No way, wasn't now a forbidden spell?"
"Yeah, there's no damage to the surrounding despite being a forbidden spell, it's a

convenient spell, see."

I explain it to the surprised Hikaru.

This was also something I found in the forbidden library during my catalog search.
It turns even the adjoining space into ash, so it's a convenient spell against a foe like the sakuramochi demon from before. It seems it can defeat monster with no substance and barrier too.

It's a single object magic, so I use it again for 15 times continuously.
The magic requires 300MP for one shot, so I use a mass-produced holy sword as a battery along the way.

"F-Forbidden spells, chantlessly?"

Hikaru leaks out voice of surprise, but for some reason, I can use forbidden spells from the magic column normally.
Being able to instantly use forbidden spells that normally need several minutes to several dozens of minutes chanting, I think it's quite a cheat.

I open the [Gate] of space magic, and throw Shin-kun together with the Shield Coffin's pillar into it.
I hold back Arisa and the others who were going to follow with my hand.

"I-I want to go too."
"You can't. A demon lord can use unusual attacks in various ways, so everyone should wait here in the royal capital. Furthermore, a state of emergency happened here, so there are many things that need to be taken care of right?"

When I say so, everyone besides Mito pulls back.
Bringing Mito who's a hero along should be fine, but I want her to do something, so I ask her before she can talk.

"Mito, please go to the royal capital and tell them that the demon lord has been eliminated."
"I can do that after he's been--"
"Master! Can you turn him into a human again like you did with Hisui last time? Is it impossible to turn him back, not killing him?"

Arisa desperately spoke, interrupting Mito.

Mito who sees that Arisa is having a complicated expression with resignation mixed in.
She's probably seen many things during her time as Ancient King Yamato. Next time I'll listen to her complaints and hardships together with some liquor.

"That's my intention from the start. I can't guarantee that he'll absolutely turn back, but I'll try to take as many measures as possible."
"U-un. Master can surely do it. I believe you!"

I undertake that while patting Arisa who has tears on the corner of her eyes.
As an insurance for if anything happens, I have to turn that back into human by all means.

After teleporting everyone to the places they want with Unit Arrangement, I take a wand that's specialized in expanding range from my Storage.
It looks like a dead twig with a lot of emerald-colored branches.
It's something manufactured from a branch growing on the world tree in the void sky, so calling it a twig isn't necessarily wrong.

I use the mind magic's [Flat People] toward the people of the royal capital.
This is an original spell I've created from mind magic's [Shepperd] and [Brain Wash] in order to suppress panic and unrest of people.

After confirming the effect on the map, I move to the desert where Shin-kun is waiting with Unit Arrangement.

◇

The shield coffin where Shin-kun's imprisoned is waiting among the dry air where the sun is blazing.
It's a composite of space and ice magic so it's not something so fragile it can melt from heat.

Nevertheless, I can hear the sound of ice crackling from inside the shield coffin.
Demon lords really can't be sealed with just this much after all.

When I look better, violet mist has begun to ooze out from the inside.
I reach my hand to see if I can touch it like with magic and barrier, but my hand just passes through it. It somehow looks like when I tried to cut a [God's Fragment] with a holy sword.
It'll be troubling if he forces himself and gets his demon lord-fication progressed, so I decide to release the magic myself.

Oops, before that let's move to a better place where I don't have to worry about environmental damage.

I make a sub-space using the forbidden spell of space magic [Another World].
The enclosure doesn't surpass the sub-space created by the goblin princess Yuika's Unique Skill, that one is just in another league compared to this.
By default, there's nothing inside the sub-space, so I set it to transcribe the surrounding terrain.
The sub-space is as vast as the current desert, so it'd be alright even if we fight.

I restore my magic power that has been used up in large quantity from the mass-produced holy sword, and then move to the sub-space.

After closing the entrance to the former world, I release the shield coffin that imprisons Shin boy.
I put a troublesome-looking recovery item called [Magic Crystal Pillar], that has been imprisoned together with him into, into my storage.

Shin boy appears while scattering white chunks of ice.

"W-where is this? Has my magic turned the royal capital into a desert?"

Shin boy made a guess while glaring at me.

Unfortunately, his articulation was a bit strange.
It seems to be the initial stage of a broken soul vessel, so I have to make him stop using his power.

Looking at his Unique Skill's name, it should be a passive-type, so its effect to the [Soul Vessel] should be lower compared to active-type ones that have number of usage limit.

"Do you want to know where this is?"
"Say it!"

In order to intimidate him, I destroy the [Sand Spear] magic that Shin boy used with [Break Magic].

"Impossible! Erasing a magic invoked by me, the ruler of magic?"

Next, he began to summon greater demons, but I hindered it by using [Break Magic] whenever their heads showed up, forcing the greater demons back.

"Duaamnnn you out-of-bounds reincarnated personn"

Shin boy roars, but his magic has been used up, so I can only hear it as sour grapes.
Far from even fighting, he probably can't even use a reinforcement magic.

Shin boy notices that the [Magic Crystal Pillar] is gone when he was trying to recover his magic power, he looks around the surrounding restlessly.

I cross my arms while examining him.
He seems to be a child without patience, I'll answer him once as a bait to pull information out of him.

"I'll talk to you so calm down. This is another world."
"Another world? What do you mean."

Shin boy asked another question to my vague answer.

"The so-called sub-space see."
"S-sub-space? ....That means you used the age of gods magic, 『Another World』!"

He can see through the magic name from the 'sub-space' term probably because of his [Master Wizard] Unique Skill.

I think the age of gods magic refers to [Magic used when gods were living among people], but please stop adding a new category since it's confusing.

"You're all questions huh. I'd like you to answer my questions sometimes too."
"Hmph, what do you want to know."

--Huh? He's awfully obedient.

"Who made you into a demon lord?"
"I wanted to become demon lord myself."

He wasn't forced by anyone huh?

"Not that, I mean the people who cooperated with you in order to turn you into a demon lord."
"The one who gave me the Demon Lord Orb was my shitty father."

--Demon Lord Orb?

Looks like the theft disturbance in the Royal Capital was actually aiming for that Demon Lord Orb.
I tried searching on the map, but the thing called Demon Lord Orb doesn't exist around him or in any known area.

Still, an item that changes a person into a demon lord huh....

Don't tell me, the shitty father he's talking about is the demon god?

"You shouldn't call your father shitty."
"I don't care about someone who thoroughly caused troubles to me and my mother, and then became a demon lord in another world after dying."

Good. Apparently he's not the demon god--.

Although it'd be bad if the father is the type of a demon lord that could mass-produce demon lords like himself, guessing from Shin boy's [False King] title and what I heard from the Dog-head, his father probably turned his own [God's Fragment] into the shape of the so-called Demon Lord Orb and gave it to Shin-kun.

Nevertheless, even though Shin-kun is saying whatever, he's still explaining it properly, it seems his nature is still a virtuous one. Having the interrogation easy is truly nice.

I have to visit his father once I've finished talking to him.

"Answer my question this time."

Turn end huh.
Well fine. Looks like we can have a discussion for now.

◇

"--I wanted to be strong enough to beat that shitty father."

After some long dialogs, the reason why Shin boy used the Demon Lord Orb is this.
There are also other desires like wanting the power needed to survive in this harsh world, but the biggest one seems to be that.

His line of thinking of wanting the result immediately is very like a boy, but there are things that you should not choose in order to obtain the result.

"Then you could have just become a hero."
"Hmph, only the elites chosen and summoned by God Parion can become heroes. A human that can only grovel on the ground like me can only become a demon lord."

No no, normally you don't become a demon lord either.

Still, it's a failure....
It's too late now, but if I just talked about his hero title when I met him, he wouldn't become a demon lord.

Well, it's really too late now.
There's no way anyone can know that unless they have the ability to see the future.

--Right!

I wonder if he'll agree to turn back into human if I tell him about the hero title, making him lose his attachment to demon lord?
I should try to persuade him by leading him.

"You have the qualification to become a hero."
"Grandma said that crooks whisper the thing you want to hear to play with people's heart."

What grandma said is right, but it's the truth in this case.

"Then you should check it yourself and see. You can use magic to check your own title right?"
"Ah, that's right."

Shin boy begins to chant, I copy that through my ears.
The chant is of the magic version of appraisal skill.

>[Mimic: Magic] Skill Acquired.

Oh, it looks like quite an useful skill.
I have to activate it.

"....I really have the hero title."
"Do you have any idea? It seems you've defeated an overwhelmingly powerful enemy and obtained it."

It's about what the [No-Life King] Zen talked about back then.

"I do.... When many monsters appeared in the Royal Capital, I fought a monster while guarding the orphanage kids.... When I was swinging my hatchet around and almost getting killed.... I might have died if a light arrow and an invisible cannonball didn't fall from the sky and defeated the monster."

Ah, the time when red rope monsters appeared en masse huh.
Shin boy probably talked about [Remote Arrow] and [Remote Stun] magic that I used.

"However, I'm a demon lord--"

Regret dwells in Shin boy's voice.
I guess now is the right timing to persuade him?

"You can just start over. I have turned a creature that had turned into a monster back into a normal bird. I'm certain that I can turn demon lord back too."

Since Hisui changed into a God Bird, Shin boy might turn into a High Human or something, but since he'll be upwardly compatible then, do pardon me.

Hearing me, Shin boy looks downward and repeats a monologue from his mouth.

--He really can't believe it after all huh.

I listen to it carefully, waiting for his answer.

"C-can I really start over?"
"Yes, of course."

I answer Shin boy's shaking voice with a dubious smile.
It's not visible since I'm wearing a mask though.

"--Like I'd say that! You hypocrite!"

Shin boy assaults me with a sword sparkling like a diamond created from magic.
According to AR reading, it's called Dragon Rending Sword with performance that exceeds the original holy sword Excalibur.

The chant spell that he's been chanting in low voice since a while ago is probably the forbidden spell [Dragon Rending Sword (Dragon Slayer)].
I think the Dog-head from before said that it's the sword that the demon god uses. I was lucky to get the spell from a windfall.

It has terrific performance, but there's no meaning to it if the user is clumsy.

"I-Impossible! Stopping a sword between hands?!"

I strike the Dragon Rending Sword stopped between my hands with my knee, destroying it.
Looks like the durability isn't that big of a deal.

It seems there are still rooms for improvement for this magic. I'm thinking of fully remodeling the spell, dyeing it with my preference.

"A magic sword with Indestructible attribute--destroyed?!"

Shin boy is surprised exaggeratedly.
In the first place, there's no way it can be broken if there's such an attribute.

I'm interested in the [God Dancing Armor] that the Dog-head was saying too, but I'd be putting the cart before the horse if his demon lord-fication progressed because he forced himself, so I restrain myself.
I didn't stop him from chanting the Dragon Rending Sword spell because I thought it'll be easier to persuade him if I broke his trump card.

By no means it's because I was interested with a code I had never heard before, forgetting to stop him.

--Nope.

His magic power must've run out again after using the Dragon Rending Sword, so he can't use magic for now.
Time to persuade him before it's too late.

"Now then, do you want to retire being a demon lord or stop being a human, choose what you like."

I turn a cheerful smile toward Shin boy.
Of course it was just a little threat. Just as I've promised to Arisa, I don't intend to kill him.

Shin boy is desperately thinking his next move while leaking gununu voice, but he probably won't come up with a good idea.

Now then, after this I just need to take out the [God's Fragment] from him, and then everything is settled.
Truly a happy end!

13-32. Demon Lord Shin (2)

Satou's here. There are various upstarts in stories, but in case of evil characters betraying their friends, I feel that there are many cases where miserable fate wait for them after their rise in power.

◇

Now then, how do I take off the Demon Lord Orb's influence from Shin boy?
While I'm thinking that in my mind, a fool comes intruding in.

"Your highness, I've come to save you with my followers zamasu!"

Smashing through the sub-space's wall, the green demon in green dragon form and mid and lower demons in various forms surge forward.
Looking at the mid demon with drill arms, that one probably has the ability to break through barrier.

"G-good work--"

Shin boy was going to say something, but that voice was erased by the thunderous roar of my advanced magic [Photon Laser] purging the demons.

As expected of an advanced magic.
The demons pleasantly pop off.
It's a bit too noisy, and the surrounding temperature increases greatly, but I guess it can't be helped with this firepower.

Only one mid demon that has Light Resistance skill remains, but I quickly exterminate it with a single magic-power-overloaded Holy Bolt.

"Gugaaagagaga"

I thought that the excessive one-sided battle had a bad influence on Shin boy's mental, so I turn toward him in a hurry--

"Usurpation zamasu. With the power to rule over magic, me can be a demon lord too zamasu!"

I saw the green demon possessing Shin boy just for an instant.
Shin boy's state becomes [Posessed]. He was easily posessed even though he's a demon lord, I wonder if it's because of the difference in levels?

Still, a falling out between friends huh.... In a sense, it's very like demons.

Oops, it'll be too late if I'm too carefree.
I have to do something.

It'll be simple if I use the forbidden spell of light magic [Divine Exorcism], but I haven't registered that in the Magic Column.

--This is bad.

Shin boy would fuse with the green demon if I chant too long.

--It was in a POP-ed treasure chest.

Suddenly, Arisa's voice floated in my mind.

"That's right! I have that."

While unintentionally talking to myself, I take out the [Magic Sealing Bell] from the Storage and ring it.
Ding, the calm sound of the bell spreads in the air like a ripple.

ZWAAAMMMMAASWUUUUUUU.

While letting out a loud scream, the green demon who had merged with Shin boy comes off him.
I get close to it with Ground Shrink, catch the semi-transparent ethereal body of the green demon, and tear it off Shin boy completely.

I cut the demon into pieces with a holy sword while it's still in the air.
Just before the green demon disappears, I track the magic essence line that connects the green demon's avatar to its main body.
Judging from its behavior, the green demon's avatar should not be a stand-alone but a remote-controlled one.

Feeling like trying to find a sinking fishing line in a vast ocean, I extend the magic essence detection.

--Found it!

The next moment, I spring out in the base of the green demon beyond.
I don't know myself how I moved here.

Is it magic or skill--I'll think about it later.

I stitch the main body of the green demon who's zamasuzamasu-ing with the space magic [<<Dimension Pile>>] so that it can't escape, and finish it off with a holy sword.

Oops, I can't let my guard down here.
This kind of guy won't be completely annihilated with just this much.

I use [All Map Exploration] magic after a long while and investigate this area thoroughly.

I thought it'd be an area without map, but it turned out to be [Rotted Abyss Labyrinth:

Remains].
Apparently, this is one of the withered labyrinths.

I found a red dot in the area.
It seems to be a split body of the green demon that has possessed a rat.

Good grief, just how hard to die are these demon guys.

Since there won't be any victim in a withered labyrinth anyway, I use the [Photon Laser] from earlier once again, completely annihilating the last fragment of the green demon through the labyrinth wall.
With this, I don't have to worry about the zamasu zamasu and the green demon again.

Auto Loot of the booty begins, my Log is flowing at great speed.
Sorting the room that's full of junks, there are only several green colored globes that remain in the corner of the room.

--What's that?

I go closer to them and the AR reading tells me what they are.

Apparently, they're specimens the green demon had used to make its mock bodies (avatars).
The green globe breaks when I touch it with my hand, and the creature inside shows itself.

--KYEWWROUUUN.

The green infant dragon tilts its head.
Unlike the green demon's mock body, it's really adorable.

While feeding the truck-sized infant dragon with some whale meat, I open a space magic's [Gate] and let it out of here.
After the infant dragon, I also help the other mythical beasts and animals from the globes and let them out of here.
Sorry for the discrimination, but I exterminate the ones that are monsters like wyverns quickly.

The problem is the humans.

For now, after helping them out of the globes, I make them sleep with water magic's [Anesthetic Sleep], and then send them to Echigoya Firm with Unit Arrangement.
I've ordered one of the executive girls to take care of them, so leaving them should be fine.

Of course I send people who have felony on their Reward and Punishments to the Royal Capital's prison with Unit Arrangement.
This isn't the first time I sent people there forcibly, and the wardens there are flexible, so there's no doubt that they'll be taken care of properly.

◇

I come back to the sub-space where I left Shin boy behind.

Even though he's in critical condition, the demon lord's life force ties him to the living.
I thought he'd fine since he's a demon lord, but it seems my estimation is a bit off.

Shin boy would have died if I were to liken him with Wild Boar King and Dog-head.

I stop Shin boy's bleeding with intermediate healing magic.
It'll be troubling if I completely heal him, I'm thinking of releasing Shin boy's demon lord-fication now.

Perhaps the green demon's fusion earlier affects him adversely, violet colored aura begins to ooze out of Shin boy's body.
I try to extend my hand once again, but my hand really does pass through the violet aura.

I take out the Divine Sword from the Storage, and touch it on the violet aura.
The aura is sucked at the point where the Divine Sword touches it, while the surrounding aura is scattered like oil spilled on water.

It doesn't seem good, so I quickly put the Divine Sword back into the Storage.

Now then, what should I do....

I can't be too leisurely at this.
That said, besides the Divine Sword, there's probably nothing that can meddle with the [God's Fragment]--

...no, there's one.

I choose that among the list of item in the Storage.
I don't like showing my failure, but I can't say that either.

I push out the jet black lump toward the violet aura, it feels like touching a thin vinyil membrane.

--I can do it.

Moving like I'm making a cotton candy, I twine the violet aura using the jet black lump--my black arm that I had to cut after being taken by divinity.

As expected of Easy Mode.
Even though I did it myself, I didn't think it'd really work.

Before long, some heavy response came.

While being careful not to sever the thread created by the violet aura, I pull the thread out like I'm fishing, and then a violet light jumps out of Shin boy's chest.

『S-stop with the violence』

The dark violet light grumbles while flickering.

『Geez, just when I was taken out, I got put into some imatture child.』

While swinging left and right, the light grumbles continously.

『Gotta complain to God when I go back』

I don't intend to let it go, so I take out and immediately draw the Divine Sword from the Storage, cutting the [God's Fragment].

Like before, the dark violet light is sucked to the Divine Sword.
Now then, the fragment's disposal is over with this.

I put the Divine Sword back into the storage, and then heal Shin boy who's bloodied all over because the dark violet light jumped out.
His two-meter big figure of man gradually shrinks, returning to his original frail looking boy.

The horn has fallen out and his hair and body color have also returned, but it seems he doesn't completely turn back into his original figure.
His forelock and sideburns are still in violet color among his white hair, his right hand remains in claw shape.

His race has become [Human(Fiend)], and his state is [Miasma Poisoning].
I feel that his race would become Fiend if I left him alone.

His title has also changed to [Fallen Hero], and hidden titles [Former Demon Lord], and [Half Demon] have appeared.
His Unique Skill is gone, and his level falls to 20 from 50, but it's still higher than his original level.
[Composite Magic], [Magic Knowledge], [Magic Resistance: Composite] have also appeared on his skill column. They're some quite enviable skills.
The last one in particular, I want our girls to have it.

Shin boy groans painfully.
His eyes opened for an instant, one of it was red, the other was violet.
It's probablyl an influence from [Miasma Poisoning].

I have to do something fast....

I have a hunch that the [Miasma Poisoning] can be healed if I make him drink the Nectar, but I'm afraid that he'll turn into some godlike High Human being.

While thinking like that, the [Miasma Poisoning] is cured when I use the earth-elemental abnormal status recovery magic.

"Easier to do something than worrying about it huh--hm?"

Shin boy's state jumps into my view who feels anticlimatic.
The [Miasma Poisoning] that should have been cured reappears.

While feeling puzzled, I tried using abnormal status recovery magic from water, light, and other elements, but the result was the same.
Once it's been cured, it reapppears again if I wait for a bit.
Moreover, everytime I cure him, Shin boy's condition becomes worse, a condition called [Weakening] is even added to his state now.

Perhaps he can't be cured unless it's temple type recovery magic.
Although, if I bring Shin boy in his state right now there, they'll likely eliminate him without question.

Hikaru uses force magic, so she should be not that different from me, as for other people....
After thinking that far, I remember a person of exceptional talent.

13-33. Demon Lord Shin (3)

Satou's here. In long stories, new difficulty makes an entry when everything seems to have been solved. Whenever I read the scene, I feel excited with the new things while also feeling sympathetic towards the protagonists.

◇

"If it isn't Kuro? Is the half demon over there a souvenir? Sorry but, if it's for blood supply it's unnecessary you know?"
"You're mistaken, I've got something to consult you--"

This is the castle of Ban the vampire in the lower layer of the labyrinth.
I came here since I thought he, who has lived for a long time, would know something about it.

Aze-san has lived longer, but he should be more well-informed about things related to monsters.
I thought of relying to the orcs of Heraruon temple that are living in the royal capital underground, but bringing an unfamiliar human to the place where they're hiding would not be good, so I took it off the list.

While handing my present, a small barrel of『Blood of Lesseu』wine to the vampire princesses, I cut the talk about Shin boy's [Miasma Poisoning].

"So it's like that dearuka. Ryuna, take out the miasma."

The taciturn little vampire princess bites the unconscious Shin boy's neck and begins to suck the miasma instead of blood.
In just 30 seconds, Shin boy's [Miasma Poisoning] is cured.

However, that's--.

"--what, it came back again?"

Ban is surprised as the [Miasma Poisoning] state came back again just like when I used healing magic.
Looks like the effect of demon lord-fication is firmly rooted.

Apparently, the little vampire princess thinks that she's failed, she bites Shin boy's neck once again trying to suck out the [Miasma Poisoning].
Shin looks like he's in pain, so I use magic power healing skill to circulate magic power in his body, relieving his weakened state.

"Hey, I heard Kuro-san came--"

The little-oni (goblin) girl Yuika runs on the corridor of the castle of the perpetual night wearing a frilly apron like a young wife.

Even though she's goblin, she's not ugly like the demi-goblin, she looks completely like a human besides a small horn that grows on her forehead.
I want Lulu, Sera and her to stand together in a stage at least once.

"Ara? A new guest--Ryuna, stop sucking the miasma noja!"

Yuika's gentle expression that looks like Lulu's changes into a stern one like that of a veteran warrior.
The oldest personality of Yuika who has multiple personalities, [White Oni Sovereign] Yuika 3 probably surfaces.

Yuika 3 continues with some shocking words.

"If you keep that up, that youngster's『Soul Vessel』will break!"

As I thought, it seems unlike monsterfication, demon lordfication can't be dealt with ordinary means.

◇

"That youngster's miasma is the proof of the breaking soul vessel."
"Yuika, do you know what we should do?"

I ask Yuika 3 who saw through Shin boy's state in an instant.

"Umu.... The ways to directly restore a soul vessel is limited noja."

Yuika 3 closes her eyes like she's remembering things, and then she suddenly talks.

"According to an ancient document, you should let him soak in the dragon spring created by heavenly dragon or ancient dragons for three days and three nights, but people can't pass through the barrier of the Dragon Valley, and this boy won't hold up if you bring him to another continent."

--Hm? The Dragon Valley's barrier cannot be passed through?

"Once, I fought a hero whose Soul Vessel was broken, but I had some Hermit Liquor (Souma) at that time, so the hero survived by drinking it noja."
"Is there no Souma remaining?"
"None. The one I used at that time was the last."

I look around while applying magic power healing to Shin boy who's breathing painfully.
Yuika didn't mention it, but I could ask the heavenly dragon in the Fujisan mountains to make a dragon spring even without going to another continent.

However, Yuika 3 still continues her story.

"I don't have any Souma, but I know the recipes of medicines with similar effect."

Yuika 3 sticks out her chest proudly.
She looks like she wants to be praised, so I commend her, "As expected of the White Oni Sovereign!", and urge her to continue.

"The Phantom Miraculous Medicine created from the Blood Sphere and the Phantom Soul Liquor."

Unfortunately, I don't have the Phantom Soul Liquor.

"Dragon Vermilion created from Dragon Spring Liquor and Spirit Drop."

Spirit Drop huh.... The Sakura Drop I got from the Sakura Dryad should be a kind of Spirit Drops.
I should be able to make this one.

"Looks like I can somehow make this Dragon Vermilion."
"That's good, but Dragon Vermilion has stronger effect as a strengthening medicine than healing. In case of a fledgling like this youngster, he might die before his Soul Vessel is restored."

--That's out of the question then.

It seems Yuika 3 senses it, she tells the next recipe in a hurry.

"The most certain one is after all, the omnipotent miraculous medicine, Elixir."
"Do you know the recipe?"
"Do not panic."

While her white skin is dyeing red, Yuika pushes the forehead of me who drew closer to her.

"The ingredients for Elixir are a bit troublesome."

Yuika raises one of her fingers, and speaks of the first ingredient.

"First, the『Sap of the World Tree』that only grows in the Elf Village is needed. Well, getting this one is impossible, but do not worry. A sap of an old tree soaked in philosopher's stone can be the substitute noja."

It's fine. I have metric tons [Sap of the World Tree] in my storage.

"Next, you need around 10 grams of the fine powder of either the dragon's bone, fang, or horn. One from an adult dragon is preferable, but using the one from the old evil dragon living in this labyrinth should be fine too, we should go get it together later noja."

I have them from the black dragon Heiron and the heavenly dragon, so there's no problem.

"And then the Monstrous Silver Ash created from the silver skin of the Great Monstrous

Fish. I don't want to ever fight that monster again, but making one from the Monstrous Fish and the Silver Narwhal that breed here should be fine."

Silver skin huh....

"By silver skin, do you mean this?"
"W-what? ....T-that's it! How did you get that?!"

It's the piece of meat whom Liza and Pochi were struggling with back then.
So it's really not just a hard-to-eat part.

"I can prepare the other ingredients too. The ingredients earlier are all of it right?"
"There are several miscellaneous ones, but the hard-to-get ones are all of the earlier."

When I've finished hearing the recipe from Yuika 3, Ban who's been looking like he wants to cut into the conversation from awhile ago calls out.

"I'm sorry to interrupt when you two are fired up, but if it's Elixir, I have some dearu."

Telling so, Ban takes out a red bottle from Item Box.
The AR reading also states Elixir.

"It has around 10% probability of being inside the treasure chest that appears after you defeat a『Floormaster』dearu. The effect of the old ones is questionable, but this one is from around five years ago, so it should be fine dearou."

It seems a normal magic medicine will lose its effect in one year, but according to the information on the AR, it's good enough to be considered un-degraded.

"I have no use of it, therefore I'll give it to you."
"Thank you! It really helps."

I open the Elixir bottle I got from Ban and put it on Shin boy's lips.
I slowly hold it into his mouth, and then he begins to slowly swallow it.

Good.... As expected, I don't want to feed it mouth-to-mouth to a man.

"Fumu, he should be fine now nanoja."

Just as Yuika 3 has said, Shin boy's state has changed to [Miasma Poisoning: Slight].

"Next you should let him rest for 2-3 days. He should avoid places where the density of the magic essence fluctuates."
"Then I'll provide a room in my castle."

I accept Ban's offer and entrust Shin boy to the castle maids.

Since Arisa is probably worried, I tell her that Shin boy is saved with [Short Message] magic.

◇

"Come to think of it, Kuro, is that a new mask?"

Yuika 3 stares at my face while looking puzzled.

"I prefer the plain Japanese face from back then rather than the face of a foreigner artist y'know."

Oops, I forgot that I used the face of my Japanese coworker even though I called myself Kuro back then.
Huh? That reminds me, Ban and the vampire princesses reacted the same as back then even though I had a different face, I wonder why?
I ask directly since it bugs me.

"We vampires can distinguish people from the smell of their blood dearu."

Quite vampire-like answer came back.

"Moreover, I have no family who's narrow-minded enough to even raise the corner of their eyes just because the other party looks different, unless it's a scheme."
"That's true, the time scale of humans' and our lives is different, therefore it's normal for their appearance and personality to differ whenever we meet."

Yuika nods to Ban's gallant words.
They're quite open minded.

In truth, there is no problem of me showing my true face to them who are staying indoor in the labyrinth lower layer.
They probably won't plot to make use of my power to do something evil either.
There are also the maids in the castle, but they will be [Contract]-ed not to tell anything when they're dismissed from the castle, so it should be fine.

--This is a good opportunity.

I think so, and release the Kuro disguise.

"This is my true appearance. My real name is Suzuki Ichirou, but I mainly call myself Satou here."
"Hoo, you're quite young dearuna."
"Umu, the glossy skin without a trace of beard is splendid noja."

The reaction is lacking even though it's the long-awaited exhibition.

Putting Ban aside, Yuika 3's assessment is strange.
Perhaps, she's a shota-lover like Arisa.

It seems she's noticed my line of sight, Yuika 3 who's touching my body all over shouts out,

"T-this isn't what you think noja!" and separates away.
I've grown accustomed to Arisa's sexual harassment, so I tell her, "Please don't worry about it", and turn toward Ban.

"That's right, thank you for the Elixir earlier. I'm saved thanks to you."
"Do not mind it. I've said it earlier, that deadly poison is of no use for us vampires."

I guess it's like how healing magic damages undeads in games?

"Rather than that, about the silver skin you possesses.... By no means, have you fought the Great Monstrous Fish (Tovkezeera) dearuka?"
"Yeah, it was summoned by the yellow demon in the sky of Oyugock City, so I exterminated it."

Ban and Yuika stop moving after hearing my affirmation.

After a while, Yuika 3 opens her mouth, moving like a broken doll.

"E-exterminated that Great Monstrous Fish (Tovkezeera)? Did you seek help from the heavenly dragon and the Gods--no, it's possible with that level isn't it..."
"Yeah, with light magic--"
"Magic you say? A forbidden magic that could shoot down that aerial fortress, that means together with the city that it appeared in huh.... Satou, you've been through quite a gruesome battle...."

Yuika 3 whose expression turns to look like a loving mother's gently hugs my head on her chest.
Her gestures are like a mother, but the fluffiness is slightly lacking.

"By Oyugock City you mean the Duchy Capital right? There was no scar from any battle in the Duchy Capital dearu."
"What? Did you deceive me Satou?"

After hearing Ban's quizzical muttering, Yuika 3 pulls herself away from me.

"I'm not lying. I shot the magic toward the sky in order to prevent damage on the ground."

It was an intermediate light magic, not a forbidden spell though, but I keep that a secret.

"I see, I'm sorry for doubting you noja."
"Please don't mind it."

I accept Yuika 3's, who honestly apologize, apology.

"Since that's the situation, I have a lot of materials from the Great Monstrous Fish (Tovkezeera), so I can give them if you need anything."
"Then, I'd like a little of the silver skin, outer skin and subcutaneous fat dearu."

Ban jumped on my suggestion, so I ask him how much he needs.

"Alright, how many tons do you need?"
"I only need the silver skin as grindstones, so the piece earlier is enough. I'd like just enough outer skin for making protective gears for the vampire princesses. I'll be using the fat for the forge fuel, so if it's alright, I wish for around 500 kilograms dearu."

....What a modest guy.

They're huge 300 meter creatures, so even now I only have used around 1% of the materials from one of the seven, he really should've asked for more.
For this occasion, I also give him around 10 kilograms of the whale meat.

"They are too many considering the value of the Elixir dearuna.... Please take all the Elixirs from my Item Box dearu."
"No but, aren't they usable for Yuika and the others?"

Ban who looks overjoyed suggests me to take all the Elixirs.

"Right, can I have three of them? I'll be happy to have the oldest and the newest."
"That's easy. The oldest one was from 250 years ago dearuna. I have disposed the older ones, so there is nothing besides that remaining."

I've learned the Elixir's recipe from Yuika, but I want to confirm the performance of the ones from the labyrinth and my self-made one, so I decide to gratefully accept it.

◇

"Is there anything Yuika wants too?"

If Yuika 3 didn't give the information, Shin boy might have died.

"Normal sushi roll--"
"I'm sorry, I've actually gotten my hands on the bottle gourds, but I don't know how to process them so I can't move forward."

I got the bottle gourds for the dried gourds when I went to Muno territory back then.
I had given some to Lulu and Nea-san, the cooking researcher of Boruenan Village, for them to research, but since Arisa's and my memories about it are vague, there's no favorable result at present.

In addition, Lulu has obtained the freeze-dried tofu-like ingredients and cucumbers in the marketplace of the Royal Capital.

"Unfortunately, I do not know the recipe either noja. If hero Watari who taught me the way to make pickles and Japanese cooking was still alive, he might be able to teach you the way to make dried gourds, but I do not think he, who was already an old man 120 years ago, would still be alive now."

--Hm? Watari?

The date is slightly off, but I wonder if he's Watari-shi, Lulu's grandfather?
Although, even if that's true, he didn't hand down the recipe to Lulu, so there's no meaning to it.

"If you have the rare『Past Seer』skill and『Lost Knowledge』skill, you could get lost techniques though...."

Yuika muttered so in grieve.

I'll search if there's anyone with those skills when I get back to the royal capital.
I'm in luck if there's a hit.

As an apology for not being able to prepare sushi roll, I decide to present pizzas and hamburgers I've made in advance from the storage.
It seems Ban has safely obtained tomatoes too, there are tomatoes used in the dishes taken out by the castle cook.

"Satou's pizzas are really the best after all nanoja."
"Umu, I cannot help but admit that it's slightly superior to our castle's cook."

I saw the onee-san cook gripping her hand in frustration in one corner of the room after Hearing Yuika and Ban.
I approach her using Ground Shrink and hand her the recipe.

"....N-no need for pity."
"This isn't a pity you see. This recipe is--a challenge I guess? I'm expecting pizzas more delicious than this recipe the next time I visit here."

There's a sense in hiding the recipe if this is a business, but as for me, I'll be happy if various variations get developed from the recipe I gave instead.
The onee-san cooks holds the recipe on her bountiful breasts, and promise, "I'll prepare a plate that will make Satou-sama groans without fail", I'm looking forward to the next visit from this time forward.

Incidentally, I also give her several bottle gourd fruits.
If she's of an inquiring mind, she might discover the dried gourd recipe that we couldn't find after all.

Now then, I'll be a bother if I stay too long, so I promise to have the shogi match with Ban later when I pick Shin boy up, and then teleport to the Royal Capital.

◇

Everyone besides Hikaru is present in Pendragon Mansion.
Looks like Hikaru is still in the King's office in the royal castle.

For some reason, Arisa is lying in the bed.

"Huh? Have you caught a cold Arisa?"
"Uy, I've got a fever...."

Arisa's state is [Sick] so it's probably a symptom of cold.
Arisa who has an ice bag on her forehead looks painful, so I use water magic [Cure Disease] for her.

"Fui~, thankyou. Feel better. Gonna sleep for a bit."
"Yeah, good night. I'll make you some rice porridge when I get back."
"Rather than rice porridge, chilled syrup is better~"

That's a hard request.
I did make some when we opened a food stall in my university days though, it should be made from ginger, honey and starch syrup, I should be able to make it somehow.

"Okay. I'll make some delicious one."
"Un, I'll be waitin'"

Arisa falls asleep after muttering so.
She still looks a bit painful, so I only go to the royal castle in Nanashi clothes after making the chilled syrup in the mansion's kitchen and delivering them to Arisa's bedside.

At this time, I didn't know about Shin boy attacking the royal castle with Meteor and Arisa preventing that by excessively using her Unique Skills.
....I only knew that after I had finished my business in the royal castle.

13-34. The King's Request

Satou's here. Your viewpoint changes when your standpoint changes, when your viewpoint changes, the people who's doing the talk will also change. When a senior who complained about his boss got promoted, the boss who was the target of the complaint said the same lines as the senior.

◇

While the optical camouflage skill is active, I move to the king's office with Unit Arrangement.

In this room, there are the king, the prime minister and Hikaru in Nanashi clothing.
I thought that they would be with Sir Julberg, the first seat of Shiga Eight Swords, but it seems he's waiting in the next room.

That's good and all, but Hikaru has taken off her mask.

Apparently, she has talked that she's the Ancestor King to her descendants--wait, they're not her direct descendants is it?
Well, let's not worry about the minor details--.

For now, I'll confirm it with [Telephone].

『Has your identity been exposed already?』
"Un, I didn't want to deceive him after seeing Sharlick-kun's visage.... I'm sorry?"

That can't be helped then.

Moreover, now that I'm able to use magic and skills that need chanting, there's no need for me to be that highly strung in hiding my identity.
Of course I'm not planning to recklessly expose myself and put a wrench on our sightseeing tour.

I undo the optical camouflage and show myself before the three.

"Yahoo"
"Two Ancestor King-sama?!"
"W-what does this mean?!"

Unlike Hikaru who's waving her hand, the king and the prime minister stop moving.

Huh? Did the fact that I'm a different person not exposed?
My way of talking and behavior should be quite different though.

Moreover, Heim of Shiga Eight Swords should have seen me together with Hikaru who was disguised as Nanashi, I wonder if he hasn't reported yet?

"I did say that I'm not the Ancestor king from the beginning right? I corrected you several times didn't I?"

Rather than the king and the prime minister, Hikaru reacts more exaggeratedly to my words.

"Pu, kukuku, w-what's with that way of talking--mou, you're not a character from an otome game, you should just speak normally."

Hikaru begins to laugh out loud.
No, leaving aside the intonation, my lines aren't that strange right?

I wonder if it touched Hikaru's switch or something?

Well fine. Using this occasion, I'll change my way of talking from the hard-to-speak Nanashi's tone to the haughty Kuro's one.

"Then I'll straighten my tone. As you can see, I'm not Yamato. I'll let you know that Yamato and me, hero Nanashi, are cooperating with the same goal in mind."

Afterwards, the king and the prime minister understand the situation after several questions and answers.

When I was explaining that I don't have any ambition to rebel toward Shiga Kingdom, I was told off, "We do not have such a worry", in stereo.

Also, I told the king that there's no problem in him not using polite speech, but he rejected it saying, "As someone who's respected by Ancestor King-sama, there is no need to be considerate to us."
I feel that they've misunderstood that I am a God's apostle this time.

◇

"--I wish to request something to Hero Nanashi-sama."

When I had finished reporting the matter about the false king disturbance, the king cut in.
He's still calling me with [Sama] even though the misunderstanding about Ancestor King thing has cleared up, perhaps because they think I'm a God's apostle.
As a side note, I hid Shin boy's name and the fact that he's still alive.

I'll refuse the king's request if he's asking me to suppress the rebellion in Bishtal Kingdom.
If I go to the war ground, I have no choice but to see people killing each other after all.

"Say it--"
"We are aware that the current『Demon Lord Season』is different than usual. Great disturbance like from the era of Ancestor King-sama when she defeated the『Golden Wild Boar King』and the time when the first Hero-sama of Saga Empire was facing off against the『Onifolk King』probably will begin."

--King, the preface is too long.

"Many large countries waned during the time of the great disturbance, and numerous small tribes and countries perished without any mean to protect themselves, such things are written in the history book. There is no doubt that even our Shiga Kingdom would have been on the verge of ruin like the old kingdoms were not for the assistance of Nanashi-sama."

I think that analysis is correct.
Demon lords at the level of [Golden Wild Boar King] should be manageable if the Heavenly dragon and Hikaru are there, but in case of the Dog-head, I don't think they can win.

"Enough with the preface. Cut to the chase."

The king probably wants to ask Hero Nanashi to stay in the Royal Capital in order for the kingdom to weather that [Age of the Great Disturbance].
I have the Unit Arrangement, and am now able to use convenient magic anyway.
Even during my sightseeing tour, I can protect Shiga Kingdom just fine.

Above all, Echigoya Firm is here, and I have acquaintances in the Royal Capital.

Besides, the Royal Capital's Sakura Salmon and Oumi beef are delicious, and the royal capital's Sakura trees and the field of milk vetch are splendid.
After all is said and done, it's our duty to protect tourist attractions.

"If I'm allowed to--"

After the preface, the king speaks of something unexpected.

After contemplating for a while, I confirm to the king.

"--Are you serious?"
"Yes."

The king assents with a rock-like face, and then repeats his talk in different wording.

"Please leave Shiga Kingdom as is, and depart to the places where demon lords will appear on the oracle and eliminate them."
"Certainly, the demons that attacked the Royal Capital have been dealt with, and the people involved in the demon's plot have all been removed, but that doesn't mean that Royal Capital is completely safe now you know?"
"Of course I am not optimistic in that regard."

It appears the prime minister isn't disagreeing with the king's decision, he's silently listening to our conversation one step behind the king.
I'll ask his real intention for the time being.

"Don't you have to prioritize the interest of your own kingdom as a king? What is the true meaning of exposing Shiga Kingdom to danger?"

"'Save the suffering of the neighboring countries, help to preserve the peace of the continent', that is the national policy since the founding of the kingdom."

I send a glance to Hikaru who's related to the kingdom's found.

"No well~ the world had became a terrible place at that time. Every country was dying, pillaging and aggressions were rampant everywhere. Due to seeing such things, I was slightly too fired up when we were deciding the founding slogan with my friends at the time."

I see, she couldn't retract it after letting it out of her mouth huh.

"Please do not worry, Nanashi-sama. Shiga Kingdom has Shiga Eight Swords and Shiga 33 Wands. Moreover, Mithril explorers should be able to win against demons and monsters. The new heroes[1], Viscount Pendragon and his Seven Braves will also support the kingdom in crisis, even though they belong to another fiefdom."

Oh? Looks like Satou is evaluated well, I wonder if it's because of Liza.

"It's alright. I'll be staying in the Royal Capital, Ten-chan is also watching over from the top of Fujisan Mountains, she'll be coming to save us if Shiga Kingdom receives large damage like the destruction of its cities."

--No, no, go help before the destruction!

I retorted to Hikaru in my mind.
Geez, please stop playing around in the middle of a serious talk.

"Understood. I'll take on the task of destroying the demon lords."

It'll be troubling if the tourist attractions become empty plot of lands before we come visit them after all.

◇

"Right! Creeping in every time is annoying, so can't you give me the pass to go here?"

When I was thinking that it's about time for us to leave, Hikaru said such words.

"Certainly. Ancestor King-sama's peerage will be... 『Great King』 if it's alright with you?"

With a serious expression, the king told a joke to Hikaru.

The prime minister is all smile too, so it must be a joke.
Good grief, please stop with the hard-to-understand joke.

"Eh~, I don't wanna something like 『Great King』. Just a simple pass is enough."
"H-however! We can't allow Ancestor King-sama to be a common citizen!"

Fumu, if being a common citizen is not good, then--.

"Then, I'll hand over the house of Duke Mitsukuni to Yamato."
"H-however, that's the peerage that has been given to Hero Nanashi-sama."
"I don't mind. It's fine as long as Echigoya Firm can use the name during our business transactions."

I'm not going to socialize in Duke Mitsukuni's name after all.

"Is it alright?"

For some reason, Hikaru is asking me with upturned eyes, so I assert.
The house of Duke Mitsukuni is originally a peerage for Hikaru. There's no need to hesitate.

"Then, please call me Duchess Mitsukuni in public. The name is Mito, please take care of me."
"Congratulations, Ancestor King-sama."
"Then we will announce it in today's evening party."

Mito spoke of it joyfully, the prime minister and the king replied with smiles.
The prime minister's words slightly bother me, but since it's normal for the prime minister who likes the Ancestor King to be strange, I splendidly ignore it.
With this, Hikaru should be able to freely interact with the descendants.

By the way, despite the demon lord incident, it seems the evening party tonight is enforced.
Apparently, there are a lot of nobles who have evacuated their families from the royal capital, the party is probably for soothing the nobles who remain in the capital.

I need to prepare for the evening party, so I teleport to Pendragon Mansion with Hikaru.

◇

Looks like Arisa is still not feeling well, she's sleeping in the bed.

"So she's really...."

Seeing that, Mito muttered.

"What do you mean?"
"Do you know that that the demon lord tried to drop a huge meteor on the royal castle?"
"No, I don't--"

Replying reflexively, I understand what Hikaru is trying to say.

"Don't tell me, that Arisa. Did she remove that huge meteor with teleport magic?"
"Yes. I think she was using her Unique Skill, she was too reckless. Do you know what will happen if you use Unique Skill too excessively?"
"Yeah.... I know."

Even while feeling surprised to my own shaking voice, I can't hold back the unreasonable

anger that's welling up from the bottom of my heart.

Of course I can easily imagine that there would be enormous damage in the royal castle and the royal capital if Arisa didn't overdo it.
I also understand that at that time, there was no one but Arisa that could remove the huge meteor in the Royal Capital.

--However.

Nevertheless, I never wanted Arisa to use her Unique Skill.

It's still fine if it's just making her turn into a demon lord.
I've confirmed the way to turn her back thanks to Shin boy.
If she just dies normally, she can be revived at the Duchy Capital's Tenion Temple.

However, the stage after the demon lordfication, the complete breakdown of the [Soul Vessel] means the annihilation of the soul.
A complete annihilation, impossible to be reincarnated or revived--.

Only that is unacceptable.

"U-um, Master, a-are you mad about something?"

Lulu who's on Arisa's bedside let out a frightened voice.
Frightening my ward like this, I'm a failure as a guardian.

"It's alright. I'm not angry."

--To Lulu that is.

Enlisting the aid of Poker Face skill to erase my expression, I tell Lulu in gentle tone.
And then I gently lift Arisa in my arms.

"Munya?"

In my arms, Arisa looks up to me with vacant eyes.
Looks like she's still half-asleep.

I take out a red bottle from Storage to my right arm, and lightly pour magic power into it.
I open the bottle's cap with my finger, and put the liquid inside my mouth.

And then, I make Arisa drink the Elixir by mouth-to-mouth transfer.

"Mu, fugaaaaa"

Arisa who's suddenly being made to drink the Elixir from mouth-to-mouth struggles violently in my arms.
As always, her resistance is low when she's the receiver.

I pour the Elixir slowly.
Of course I also use magic healing simultaneously, just like the time with Shin boy.

This is a punishment which also serves as a treatment.

Before long I've finished feeding her the Elixir as Arisa loses her resistance.
When I separate my arms, Arisa edges back to the back of the bed and holds her chest with her thin arms.

Her face is bright red.

"E, Er~rr, r-right! I-it's better with just us two for our first time!"

As I was slowly drawing near, Arisa who ducked her head spoke such things.
Looks like she's at her wits' end, her voice is trembling.

I put my hands on Arisa's cheeks and then pull them.

"Fuga, if huft"
"It's a punishment. Didn't I tell you not to use Unique Skills in rapid succession?"
"But! The people(feofle) of the royal capital(ro'al cafifal) would have been flattened!"

It's hard to understand her words, so I separate my hands from her cheeks after pulling them.

"Still. Stop trying to save others by exceeding your limit."

Even though this world has a mean to revive people from dead, there is no way to restore a broken soul you know.

"B-but! That'll means I will not be me anymore! I can't abandon them when I have the power to save!"

Teary eyed Arisa hits me with words containing passionate indignation.
Yup, Arisa's character is orientated to allies of justice like always. I think it's truly a honorable nature.

"That's why, Arisa. I'm not saying that you should not save."

While staring at Arisa's eyes, I continue to persuade her.

"It's about exceeding your limit."
"About not using my Unique Skill?"

Arisa asks my true intention with voice shaking with indignation.

"That's right. Don't use Unique Skill『As much as possible』--"

She normally use them recklessly, so it'll be troubling if her soul is chipped little by little.

"--And, 『Absolutely』 never use Unique Skill in rapid succession."

Arisa who's fallen silent contemplates on my words.

"Even in a situation where our acquaintances may be saved if I use it in rapid succession?"
"That's right."

I immediately answer Arisa's nasty question.

"It's possible to revive them as long as the corpse remain. If there's no corpse, I'll make a clone body from the hair and piece of meat using the power of science and magic."

I don't know how long it'll take to actualize that, but since they won't be deteriorated by time inside my Storage, I'm confident that I can accomplish it eventually.

"Un, I understand...."

Looks like my thought has reached her, Arisa agrees in a low voice.

"...show...."

Arisa mutters while getting up on the bed.
Her voice gradually becomes loud.

"....I'll become strong and show you! Enough to overcome difficulty without using Unique Skill! I'll be strong enough to become an embodiment of absurdity standing on Master's side!"

Arisa who's returned to her usual state declares so in an imposing stance.
Yup, truly like Arisa.

"Tama too will become strong~?"
"Pochi too will become strong enough to defeat enemies with 『Wan Pan』[2] nodesu!"
"Yes, everyone will become strong."
"Yes! I'll do my best too."
"Nn, work hard."

The girls who have come through the door and watched the course of events also seem to have regained their usual mood with Arisa's comeback.

"Master, is it alright to set the target level to 100, so I confirm."

Nana announced so with a serious expression.
The one who answers that is Arisa who's completely recovered.

"Too soft, Nana! It's obvious that we're aiming for level 310! Aim high! Toward the absurd level that exceeds the strongest!"

The other girls are giving an applause to Arisa who thrusts her fist toward the ceiling while

breathing roughly.
Only Hikaru understands the absurdity of what Arisa is saying, but she's also clapping while smiling bitterly.

We'll be going back to the Labyrinth City soon, maybe I should work hard at power-leveling them with the middle and lower layers monsters as their opponents then.

But, Arisa.

Please stop calling me absurd so many times.

--It's truly regrettable.

1. hero as in war hero, not superhero kind.
2. wan is the onomatopoeia of dog's bark in Japanese, or 'one'. You should know the reference for this.

13-35. Escort

Satou's here. In foreign dramas, there's often a scene where young people go to a dance party. In Japan, I only ever saw it in school festivals, but I really liked the simple feeling of extraordinary days.

◇

"Duchess Mito Mitsukuni is, it?"
"That's right."
"Please take care of me~"

The Manager and Tifaliza were awfully surprised when I introduced Hikaru to them.
Tifaliza didn't raise her voice, but I know that she's surprised from the subtle change in her expression.

"Ku-Kuro-sama! D-did you get married to Nanashi-sama?!"
"--married?"

The Manager changed her expression and inched closer, but I don't understand what she means.
How'd it end up in Kuro marrying Nanashi--.

After thinking that, I somehow understand her misunderstanding.
She probably misunderstood that Nanashi is a woman after seeing Hikaru.

"Calm down, Manager. I have not married anyone. For an unspecified reason, Mito has become Duchess Mitsukuni, but in a way, she's also Nanashi."
"What does that mean?"

I explain it in simpler term to the Manager who seems puzzled with my explanation.

"Nanashi's body double--she's assumed the position of Duchess Mitsukuni in Nanashi's place, and will be in charge of socializing with the upper nobles and the king."
"Then she's one of the golden knights is she."
"Something like that."

I have to make Orichalcum armor for Hikaru soon.

"Then, from now on, Mito-sama will manage Echigoya Firm--"

I hold back the manager who's jumped to conclusion with one hand.

"I entrust Echigoya Firm to Manager from now on. Mito is only going to carry out the socialization duty with the king and the prime minister."

I don't think that Mito who's more careless than me can manage a firm, so the management of the firm should be left to the Manager from now on.

"I'm counting on you."
"Yes! I will meet Kuro-sama's expectation!"

While feeling overawed by the manager who declared so in high tension, I called the other executives and introduced Mito.
It seems the executives have misunderstood like the Manager too, but I'll leave it to the manager to clear things up.

In addition, we're planning to hold a celebration party for the auction tomorrow evening.
I've been making them work hard everyday, so today they'll get plenty of rest and tomorrow we'll have a party in perfect conditions.

Mito had finished her introduction, so I was going to go back to Pendragon Mansion with her so that she could change to the party dress, but I was called by the Manager.

"Kuro-sama, there is pressing matter that I want to talk about before you go back."
"Let's hear it--"

I send Mito ahead with Unit Arrangement, and then listen to the Manager's talk.

"The prime minister has requested a remodeling of a newly made small airship."
"To Echigoya Firm?"
"Yes, the firm's workshop doesn't have the facilities to remodel an airship even if it's a small one, so I had refused the request at my own discretion, however, the prime minister ordered us to have Kuro-sama and Trismegistus-sama examine it...."

I receive a resume from the apologetic Manager, flipping it to see the content.
By the way, Trismegistus is my alias for when I'm making magic tools.

"Adding defensive shields, crash prevention mechanism, and guest seats with shock absorber huh. No matter how you look at it, the output from the magic furnace is--they're offering a Philosopher's Stone?"

Looking at the words written at the end of the letter, I almost rub my eyes thinking that it's a mistake.
In my case, I have a lot of Philosopher's Stones I got from the elves and the Crimson Treasure from the [Dragon Valley], but it's generally an item that's hardly ever appeared.

Even for a large country like Shiga Kingdom, it's treated as a national treasure class [Artifact].

"The purpose isn't written, but I wonder if they're making a pleasure boat for the royalty?"
"The prime minister didn't say anything about it."

It might be an escape ship for the royal family in case of emergency.

Since we're talking about that king, I think it's probably not for himself, but his children and grandchildren.

I'm thinking of making small airships for Echigoya Firm use anyway, I'll make two or three with similar specs.
Now that I'm able to use magic, there's no need for me to ask Arisa and Mia to learn new magic, so I should be able to make the airships quick.

"Inform the prime minister that we will accept the matter about the airship."
"Certainly."

Right--.

"Is the professor's aerodynamic engine development going well?"
"Y-yes. The professor had come to ask for the budget, materials and the place for the experiment since the design has been finished."

Oops, he's finished the design already huh. He's awfully fast.
Tifaliza who guessed my surprise supplements with a cold voice.

"It should have been in the documents that I had given Kuro-sama the other day."
"Sorry. I haven't look at them yet. I'll prepare the budget and the material. As for the experiment's place, cooperate with the counterintelligence to get the prime minister prepare it."
"Understood. There is the matter of remodeling too, they should be able to prepare it immediately."

I left some monstrous fish's fins and bags of gold coins in the underground vault and then returned to Pendragon Mansion.

◇

"Ooh! Well--you look great."

I almost said, "Clothes do make the man", to Hikaru whose charm value has increased by 1200% after dressing up and putting some make-up and accessories, but I somehow succeeded adjusting it.

"Wait.... I'd have liked you to praise me in different wording."
"No well, you are beautiful enough that I couldn't recognize you."

The impression from the last time I saw her in Japan remained in me somehow, so I was surprised to see her looking like a real princess.
At that time, on top of not using make-up, her outfit was also shabby, so it might be rude to compare it with this expensive clothes.

"Ja, ja~n!"
"Jan~?"

"Ja ja ja, ja~n, nanodesu."
"Praise me."

The four dressed-up youth troupe appeared.
The four of them are turning around to show off their dresses, really cute.
Mia straight up asked for a praise, so I said some standard praise, "Everyone looks pretty."

There were many more cancellations of the evening parties than expected, so everyone's dress today is a new work.

"I think such good clothes don't suit me...."
"It's alright, it suits you well, so I praise Liza. Master, requesting evaluation of the evening party's equipment."
"Nana is right. It suits you well, Liza. Of course, Nana's dress is pretty too."

I praised the chic Liza and the sexy Nana.
The valley of Nana's breasts is too wonderful, so I order her to guard it with her laced shawl.
Some strange bugs would come if she's too sexy.

In addition, I've put a touch of gimmick to Liza's dress so that the sleeves won't get dirtied when she's eating meat dish.

Shiro and Crow aren't here since they're staying at their schoolmate's house.
Come to think of it, I can now use [Contract] skill thanks to the chant, if Nana agrees with it, it might be a good idea to release them from the slavery and change it to a non-disclosure contract.
If it goes well with the two, I should change the contract with Tifaliza and Nell too.

"U-um...."

Lulu who's peeking with half her face from the dressing room's door let out a voice bashfully.

"Mou! I've been saying that it looks good on you since awhile ago! Believe in Arisa-chan's sense!"
"A-Arisa, don't pull me so much."

Pulled by Arisa, Lulu entered the room while entangling her leg.
With her body wrapped in a white dress, that figure is truly--.

"--An angel."

Hearing my honest appraise, Lulu's face reddened too much, she got a nosebleed.
Fortunately, I was able to quickly guard it with a handkerchief, so Lulu's dress is safe.

While nursing her, I noticed something bold for Lulu who looks docile.
On top of the cut from the area on her armpit to her waist, the dress part on her back is also cut. The smooth line on her scapula and her velvety white back are bewitching.

"You're staring too much!"
"Guilty."

I couldn't take my eyes of Lulu's back until Arisa and Mia's impregnable guard blocked me from it.

--Lulu, what a fearful girl.

Now then, putting aside the joke, I sent Hikaru, who had finished her preparation, to the king's office, and then we went to the entranceway to get on board a carriage that goes to the evening party.
It seems there's going to be a special dish in the evening party tonight, so I'm glad that it's not been called off.

Worried about Zena-san, I check her location, the four people of Zena Squad are moving frantically in Earl Seryuu's mansion.
They're probably meeting Earl Seryuu's excessive demand.

Do your best, Zena-san.

◇

Before going to the evening party's venue in the royal capital, I visited the guest house where Earl Muno is staying.
I'm going to see if anyone is feeling unwell due to anxiety from the meteorite uproar at the day time.

When I entered the guest house, I found some unfamiliar young nobles who are relaxing like they own the place in the salon in the first floor.
Their levels and skills are low, but all of them have good faces.
Their looks are of the type that was popular in shoujo manga long ago.

"Oy, that--"
"Viscount Pendragon huh...."
"So it's not just the princess and the noblewomen, Karina-sama too--"

I'm being scrutinized with unfavorable glances.
They're talking in low voices that can't be heard here, but I've heard it all with Attentive Ears skill.

There are some plants and distance between the salon where they are located and the entrance where I am, it's a bit too far to greet them.

"Viscount-sama, please pardon me for not meeting you sooner."
"Good evening, Lina-sama. I'd like to have an audience with the Earl, is it alright?"
"Yes, I was ordered to immediately guide Viscount-sama when you've come."

The apprentice maid, the daughter of Viscount Emlin who has appeared to meet me, leads

me to the Earl's room.
It seems she's going to the evening party with Lady Karina, she's wearing a lovely dress that I haven't seen before.

After praising her dress, I ask her about the young noblemen in the salon.

"Was it alright for me not to greet the people in the salon?"
"Yes, please don't mind it. Every one of them is the second son or lower from the houses of unranked associate barons, or associate chevaliers. They're all people who only think of either trying to curry the favor of Karina-sama in order to become a retainer, or marrying Karina-sama and obtain the status of Baron or Viscount."

Apparently, Viscount Emlin's daughter hates them.
Muno Earldom is lacking human resources, so I feel that Ms. Nina would employ anyone as long as they're educated enough.

When we're in front of the Earl's room, the door opens, and then Lady Karina appears.
The demonic breasts that I haven't seen for a while are spreading impressive force and charm like always. Truly a sight for sore eyes.

"Ara, Sa--Viscount Pendragon. P-perchance, have you come to be my escort?"

Lady Karina's accent is strange.
Since it's been awhile since we've meet, maybe her shyness of stranger is activated even with me?

"No, I was only visiting as a courtesy to see whether Earl Muno is feeling unwell due to the disturbance at the noon."
"--Eh?"

I tell Lady Karina so, and then walk into Earl Muno's room.
Of course with everyone who's come with me here.

"Arisa, I want to talk for a bit."
"W-wait. I'll listen to you, so don't pull me with that stupid strength."

Lady Karina detained Arisa while Raka was glowing.
I'm a bit worried but it'll be boorish of me to interrupt a conversation between girls.

"--This is different from what you said."
"That's strange~, even though it was written that『A man who escapes when you woo him will chase after you if you take some distance away from him』in the『Love Master~ You too Can Get a Lover with This!』.... I guess there's really no choice but to creep in?"

From the voices on the other side of the door, I confirmed that Lady Karina was under the influence of the knowledge from Arisa's previous life. Best of all, looks like I am not hated.

Now then, leaving these two aside, Earl Muno and Ms. Nina are waiting in the room.

"Earl~"
"It's been awhile nanodesu."
"Umu, good to see Tama-kun and Pochi-kun are energetic like always."

Tama and Pochi greeted the Earl with shutan poses.

The others and me also greeted and asked for his condition afterward.
Looks like there isn't anyone who's hurt or collapsed from anxiety from the uproar.

"Earl Muno and I are going back to the territory after the ceremony tomorrow."

Substituting Earl Muno's place who's playing around with Tama and Pochi, Ms. Nina told me about their plan.

"It seems the airships that are going to be distributed to the territory lords are given in turns from the most distant land first, our turn is in half a year. We're going to send some people from the territory in order to learn the way to operate an airship in the month after the next, if the situation allows, you should take the training too."

I already know how to operate an airship, but I don't know the airship driving rule in Shiga Kingdom, so I'd like to take the training.

"And then, Karina-sama was throwing a tantrum asking to train in the Labyrinth City."

Ms. Nina shakes her head as if no way around it.

"Can I leave her to Satou-kun?"
"Yes, certainly."

I have promised Lady Karina to help her get back to Labyrinth City, so I readily consent Ms. Nina and Earl Muno's requests.
Still, is it alright for him to send his daughter to a place like the Labyrinth where monsters are running rampant?

"To tell you the truth, I was called by His Majesty earlier and told about the『Great Disturbance』."
"Do you know what the『Age of the Great Disturbance』is?"
"No, I do not."

I was told about it by the king yesterday afternoon, but it's an information that's unknown to me as Satou, so Ms. Nina explains it to me.

"In other words, dangerous time will happen in this world whenever you go. If it's all dangerous, then isn't it safer to be with you guys in the labyrinth?"

Just as Ms. Nina has said, as long as it's within my arms' reach, there's no danger even inside the labyrinth.
Moreover, Zena-san and her friends are going to raise their levels anyway, preferably,

meeting them as Kuro and doing power-leveling with the Manager and the others should be less laborious.

--Well, I won't do it though.

"I'll prioritize her safety scrutinizingly in order to meet your trust."
"I'm counting on you, Satou-kun."
"It's fine, Earl. Satou would accept Karina-dono if she got damaged."

I told the grinning Nina-san, "It's alright, Raka is with her too", her safety which had a double meaning. Of course, it's about physical injury and chastity.

"And, did the scouting for talented personnels in the Royal Capital went well?"

It was troublesome, so I didn't touch it, but under Nina-san's leadership, they should have scouted officials and former officials.

"Yeah, thanks to you and Liza-dono, we could choose as many as we liked."

Apparently, commoners and demi-humans were flooding for the application for the chance of becoming Liza's apprentices.
Moreover, since I, who was a commoner with foreigner's face, was able to become a Viscount in one generation, there were a lot of officials and honor students of the Royal Academy who saw the chance to rise up higher showed up, so many that they couldn't all be interviewed.

"That must have been difficult."
"Not really. We reduced their number with a test before the interview."

Wait--that means the young nobles in the salon are my future colleagues?
Thinking so, I asked Ms. Nina.

"Ah, those are idiots who follow Karina-dono around even though they failed the test. They're teaching materials to make Karina-dono learn how to deal with shameless men."

That's why you can drive them away if you find them annoying, so said Ms. Nina.
I feel sorry for them after hearing that much.

"Right, you'll be staying in the Royal Capital for awhile right? The Earl Muno's house has received a site in the Royal Capital from His Majesty. There's a plot for your new home too, so you should go see it when you're still in the Royal Capital."

I thought it was quite sudden, turned out that the bestowal was decided this morning.
The manager of the plot of land is Ms. Nina, but it was Earl Muno who decided the breakdown of the land.

Looking at the diagram, it seems half of the plot of land that was emptied during the sakuramochi demon's rampage from the other day, has been given to Earl Muno.

It might sound small since it's an area cut in half, but it's big enough to have three domes on it, it's quite wide.

Around half of the given land will be for Earl Muno's mansion, and the other half will be distributed to his retainers.
Looks like I'll be given one of the lands for the retainers.

The current Pendragon Mansion is a small mansion for lower noble use, I can't invite noble guests or host a party in it, so I gratefully accept the offer.
I feel bad if I just receive it as is, so I'll be paying the cost for building a small lodging house for the supervisor.
The discussion ends fast with Ms. Nina as the other party.

◇

"Sa-Satou, escort me."

Behind Lady Karina who ordered me while behaving suspiciously, I see Arisa begging me with a face that looks like it's saying, "Please."
It can't be helped, it's the guardian's responsibility to clean up his ward's mess.

"Yes, by Karina-sama's command."

After Lady Karina thanked pompously, I put out my elbow so Lady Karina can easily grab it.
At first Lady Karina didn't understand, but it seems she's grasped it after the daughter of Viscount Emlin whispered something into her ear.

With a reddened face, Lady Karina timidly reaches her hand to my elbow.
When our arms are linked complicatedly, with our arms like they're touching or not touching, I'm feeling nostalgic like I've gone back to my middle-school day.

"Then, shall we go."

Being Lady Karina's escort, we head to the evening party's venue followed by the other girls.
I'm looking forward to it since it seems that there are going to be some unusual feast today.

"O-oy, that!"
"W-why is Viscount Pendragon escorting Karina-sama?!"
"For even Lina-sama to be with him.... Damn you!"
"Having our goddess and lovely angel in both arms?!"

When we got to the entrance hall, the young men who were waiting for Lady Karina glared at me while looking like they were going to shed tears of blood.
There doesn't seem to be any fool who's going to pick a quarrel with me, so I'll just ignore those glares.
Looks like some of them are aiming for the daughter of Viscount Emlin too.

◇

We head toward the hall that's exclusively for evening party inside the royal castle.
There are several halls for evening party in the royal castle, but this is the first time I'm entering this one.

It's not far, but we moved to the parking lot of the hall with a carriage.

From the parking lot, we're going to move to the hall with floating boards made from Force magic.
The magicians who are mobilized to pick-up the guests and then return here seem to have it hard.

"Pretty~?"
"The flowers are shining nodesu."

We pass above a flower garden on the floating board's course.
The flower of this flower garden are emitting faint light like fireflies from the inside, they're extremely beautiful.

"It's wonderful desuwa."
"Beautiful."

Lady Karina and Viscount Emlin's daughter let out a sigh from being deeply moved.
For such an occasion, I tell the two, who are captivated by the flower, the standard praise, "You two are more beautiful."

Arisa and Mia were saying, "Guilty", but it's not like I'm seducing them, this much lip service is fine isn't it.

The floating boards stop, and then we get down to the blue carpet extending on the corridor.
After advancing the corridor for a bit, we came to a huge entrance hall of the evening party hall.

The hall is split in three; the one for upper grade nobles, the one for lower grade nobles, and the center hall where both sides can interact with each other.

"Nice smell~?"
"There's a wonderful smell nanodesu."
"It does smell nice, but the smell of meat is mixed among it."
"Really~?"
"As expected of Liza nanodesu!"

Looks like the beastfolk girls quickly picked up the scent of the dishes drifting from beyond the perfume scent of the nobles.
....Rather, Liza could discern the scent from this mash-up scent better than Tama and Pochi huh. She's amazing.

"Master, um, that person over there is--"

Lulu pulled my sleeves, and told me that a gentleman in butler clothes had called me.

He looks familiar.
If I'm not mistaken, I've seen him several times inside the prime minister's room.

"Sir Pendragon, I have been entrusted with a letter from my master to you."

Rather than a letter, it's a message card, I open and read it.
He has some business with me, so I have to go to the prime minister's office, so was the content.

Well now, what kind of business is it.

13-36. Inauguration

Satou's here. Getting a position means having more responsibilities, and with that position, things that you could do for the first time also increase. In case of the modern Japan, there are some situations where a section chief has no subordinate in order to cut overtime pay.

◇

"Some business came up, so please enjoy yourself in the hall ahead of me."
"Satou! Are you going to leave your escort pa-partner?"
"I'm sorry. I've been summoned by the prime minister. Lina-sama, I'm sorry, but please take care of Karina-sama."
"Yes, please leave it to me!"

Lady Karina complained because I was leaving her behind, but I'll leave the rest to Viscount Emlin's daughter.

"Liza, and Lulu, please watch over the girls so they won't make any mistake."
"Understood."
"Yes, I'll do my best!"
"Waait, you should've asked Arisa-chan there."
"Nn, objection."

After deceiving Arisa and Mia, who showed their dissatisfaction, by patting their head, I followed the gentleman who had been waiting for me to the prime minister's office.

◇

"I'm appointing you to be the vice minister of the Tourism Ministry."

The matter for my summoning to the prime minister's office could be summarized in those words.

"With all due respect, it is far beyond my ability."

Of course, I rejected immediately.
The 'tourism' word is attractive, but in actuality it's just a nice way of saying the prime minister's secret service activity.

Moreover, I remember they wanted Satou to protect the royal capital when I was talking with them as Nanashi, I wonder what's happened with that?

"Rather than someone like me, the people of noble birth with more experiences are--"
"You're fit for it."

Interrupting me, the prime minister declared.
No, I understand you're declaring and all, but please stop taking a strange pose while emphasizing your muscles.

"The Tourism Ministry is nice y'know. I am stuck in office works as a cabinet minister myself right now, but His Majesty will lend a small airship for the tourism activities."

I see, a provision to get around the tourist spots huh.
I have my own airship, but being able to move freely with a high-performance airship might be convenient.

The next lines is mixed with discrepancy from the conversation with Nanashi.

"This airship boasts the highest speed in the kingdom, and is equipped with the long-distance true magic artifact."

I see, so it's an equipment that enables us to save the kingdom from outside if anything happens.
I'm planning to clean up the obstacles ahead of time as Nanashi though, so it's not really relevant.

"Furthermore, by making use of Shiga Kingdom's prestige as a major power, you can tour facilities and events that aren't possible for a commoner, and taste the special dishes that are only served in the royal court in each country."

Mumumu, that's a bit tempting.
I can stealthily intrude off-limit places with Unit Arrangement and space magic, but that's a kill-joy right.

"And, I don't mind if you use the current 1000 gold coins fiscal budget of the Tourism Ministry like they grow on a tree. Of course, you'll have to report the spending, but that's simply a formality."

I don't care about money since I already have an income that far exceeds my consumption.
However, with these many baits, what is the prime minister trying to catch?

"--Of course, obligations goes hand in hand with those rights."

The prime minister switches the talk as if he's read my mind.

Now then, now's the real issue.

He's probably going to talk about secret intelligence.
Before it got too deep, I should skillfully change the subject and run away.

"Every time you visit a foreign country and a city, you have to make a report regarding their famous places and specialty. Especially in securing sample of the famous specialty products for the preservation, you have to absolutely make sure to bring them back--"

--Huh?

"In addition, make sure to either get the recipe of the local famous or special product, or guess the recipe by yourself or your chef and put it on the appendix of the report. In case of ingredients not being available in Shiga Kingdom, you have to consider the replacement too. If they're plants, then secure the seeds in order to grow them here."

Wait a minute--.
Prime Minister (you), since you can't freely travel outside the kingdom yourself, you want me to go in your stead?

Looks like my thought was perceived, the prime minister coughed once, and said his official stance as if he was trying to varnish over it.

"This is for the sake of protecting the cultures nurtured by each country from disappearing because of the『Age of Great Disturbance』. By no means this is for fulfilling my hobby and appetite."

You said appetite out loud.
The prime minister is probably serious, but it's possible that he's merely acting too, let's confirm it a bit more.

"Then, there is no need for me to gather intelligence in each country?"
"But of course. We have already dispatched spies dozens or even hundreds of years ago in countries that need them. There is no need in sending a hastily trained noble now. Moreover, it'd be a great loss to have the precious airship stolen under the pretext of you doing espionage activity."

I see, there are people who have fitted in the actual places just like Ninja's [Grass].

"I'm giving this position to you because you have the ability to efficiently collect cuisines and also the prowess to defend the airship from monsters and other countries."

As the prime minister has said, with me and my companions, the airship probably won't even get a single scratch as long as we aren't hit by a surprise attack from a demon lord or a greater demon.
Even if it gets broken, that means I just need repair it.

Right, I need to ask one more thing.

"What happen in case of monsters or a demon lord attacking the country that we were visiting?"
"Escape immediately if the opponent is a demon lord or a dragon. For any other opponent that you can win against, you can help them in order to demand gratitude, or you can abandon them."

The prime minister said it like that, but his way of speaking sounded like he believed that I would save them without fail.

That's true and all, but it feels like he's seen through me, it doesn't feel good.

"In case of cross-national war, you're forbidden to take side as a representative of Shiga Kingdom."

In other words, if I want to intervene a war between humans, do it stealthily without being known huh.

"Moreover, you're forbidden from visiting countries where there are oracle of demon lords reviving like Parion Holy Kingdom and Weasel Empire."

He did say that we should escape if we met a demon lord after all.
Moreover, I plan to visit those countries as Nanashi, so it doesn't hurt even if they're forbidden.

Oops, before I knew it, my thought worked as if I had taken the job.
As expected of the prime minister of a major power. He's good at negotiation.

"Is there a rule for resignation?"
"If you have written the report of the countries you've visited, then I don't mind if it's arbitrary."

Judging from the answer of this question, it looks like he seriously doesn't intend to make use of me as a secret agent or an agent for diplomacy.

"That is quite.... Doesn't the receiver side get way too much?"

The prime minister laughed off my question.

"His highness Soltrick has said it too, you really are too much of a good man. It's good that you're prudent, but if you don't have the guts to at least make use of your opponent's verbal slip, you'll get taken advantage of by old countries like Saga Empire or Garleon Union y'know."

Indeed. I remember Prince Soltrick saying the same thing when I met him in Princess Shistina's room.

"--Viscount Rottol and Duke Oyugock told me that you'd take actions that will profit the kingdom if I leave you alone without shackles after all."

The prime minister muttered in low voice.
I picked it up with Attentive Ears skill, but you wouldn't have normally heard it.

I can't argue back, since various things flashed in my mind.

"Then, let's hear your answer--"

I contemplate for awhile.

It is attractive, but there's too few advantages for me.
There's mostly no disadvantage in accepting it either though, but....

Let's decline since it's making me hesitate like this.
He probably won't force me to become the vice minister anyway.

The moment I was going to talk, the prime minister, seemingly perceived my disinterest, clapped several books that were placed on top of his office desk.
He presented the top book bound with thread.

"This is?"
"The thing that contains information about products and delicious gourmet food from each country that have been collected during my term."

--What?!

"For someone who like to travel like you, you should feel like jumping at it right?"

Kuh, to think he took out such a trump card in the end....

Prime minister, you're good!

"If you work as the vice minister, in addition to these books, I'll give you letters of introduction for the influential people in each country. This should save you the trouble even against a cook who's hard to please."

GJ (Good Job)!!

It can't be helped if it's this much.
The prime minister who's making an awfully bright smile is vexing, but I'll let him have his way here.

After contemplating for a bit--.

I answer the prime minister with my affirmation.

◇

We'll leave the details for later, so I follow the prime minister who ought to go to the evening party, leaving his office behind.
It seems the airship needs to be equipped first, so the delivery will be in one month.

During that time, I'll do what I need to be doing as Satou in Shiga Kingdom.

While I was walking and listing things that have to be done, the prime minister suddenly stopped.
Blue marker is reflected on the radar. It's Hikaru.

Looks like Hikaru is currently accompanying the king and the queen to evening party hall.

Looking at their harmony, it seems she's getting along with the queen too.

"If it isn't His Majesty."

I kneel together with the prime minister.

"Ara, Prime Minister. Is the child your son?"

Hikaru asked an artificial question.

"No, he is Viscount Satou Pendragon, one of my subordinates."
"Then, you've decided on the vice minister at last."
"Yes, I'm sorry to make your majesty worry."

It was the king who first reacted to the prime minister.

"Hm~mm. Subordinate of the prime minister huh~"

Hikaru is grinning with a face that looks like she's thought of a mischief.

"Then, I'll have Satou escort me to the hall!"
"I can be Ancestor King, no, Mito-sama's escort...."
"You can't, His Majesty must escort the queen."

Hikaru curtly refused the king's suggestion.

"Then I'll go in His Majesty's place."
"Ara? Didn't you say that your wife was coming to the evening party today? You said that you'd introduce her to me right?"

The prime minister intercepted but he got tragically sunk down by Hikaru's attack.

"Satou, your hand please."

Hikaru's triumphant face is irritating me, but I can't refuse Hikaru who has the higher position.
I should quickly fade-out once I escorted her to the hall.

Escorting Hikaru, a Duchess, sounds like it'll make me stand out, but I've stood out so much from Liza's matter and attaining Viscouncy, so it's too late now.

I took Hikaru's hand, and walked down the corridor after the king couple and the prime minister.

◇

I'll be omitting Hikaru's introduction scene.
Even though it had become a slight chaos, it was settled down by the prime minister's thunderous roar.

Entreated by Hikaru, right now I'm dancing with Hikaru in the center of the hall like we're the leading part of the evening party as the surrounding people get pushed by the atmosphere.
The tune ended before long.

"Hmm, I sure am satisfied to be able to dance with Ichirou-nii to my heart's content."
"What? If you wanted to dance, I would dance with you as much as you like in our mansion's hall."
"Not like that~ it's nice since it's during this kind of party."

I led Hikaru who was sighing in satisfaction away from the dance space.
After this, Hikaru is going to have some chat with the princes and the princess, so I part way with Hikaru and head to where Arisa and the others are.

However, someone appeared and blocked my way.

"Good evening, Satou-san. Where did you get acquainted with Duchess Mitsukuni at from earlier?"
"G-Good evening Sera-sama."

Sera who's smiling even though her eyes are not is scary.
Why do I feel like a man who's cheated.

"Satou! After leaving me behind like that, why did you become the Duchess's escort?"
"....Satou-sama, I believe in you."

Then, Lady Karina who looks angry and Viscount Emlin's daughter who looks anxious also appeared.

"Oy, look there. It's shuraba."
"That's the new viscount right?"
"That's how you'll end up when you put your hands everywhere."

I could hear some unwilling rumor mixed with envy from the young noblemen.
I didn't put my hand on anyone though, what a cruel talk.

"Satou! I have come noja! Together with Maryann too!"
"Please excuse me for my long silence, Viscount Pendragon-sama."

Turning my head to the energetic voice, I saw Princess Mitia of the small Norooku Kingdom and the daughter of Barone Dyukeli, Maryann, who should have been in the labyrinth city.
I saw Baronet Dyukeli over the crowd too, so I saluted to him.
Maryann has become an adult this year, perhaps she's come her to look for a marriage partner.

"Satou-sama! Please hear me out! I've gone through something really terrible today."

Princess Menea of the small Rumooku Kingdom with her disheveled pink hair is also present.

She has just been attacked by Demon Lord Shin this afternoon, what a tough girl.

I catch sight of noble princess whom I'm acquainted with starting from Ririna, the daughter of Gururian City's viceroy, coming here from a distance.
Somehow or other, the place became chaotic.

Usually, I would be having some pleasant chats while dancing sometimes, so why did it became like this today.

Well, I guess it's fine.
It's probably just my hallucination, but let's taste how it feels to be a popular man once in a while.

The members are mostly loli-loli though, but expecting luxury is not good right.

◇

After dancing with the girls until they were all satisfied, I succeeded running away by saying I wanted to see my companions.

"Stuffef~?"
"Pochi's stomach is full and round nanodesu."
"It was truly delicious. I won't ever forget the taste of the whole roasted Ecu."

The beastfolk girls are relaxing with satisfied faces in one section of the buffet space in the center hall.
I was interested in the whole roasted dish that sounded like the name of some currency, but there was nothing left. Truly regretful.

"Master, you're late."
"Nn, tardy."
"Welcoming Master's return."

While listening to Arisa and Mia, I drink the fruit juice that Nana gave, quenching my throat.

"Welcome back, Master. Although there's only a few, I've put aside various dishes."
"Thank you, Lulu."

Receiving the plate from Lulu, I enjoy various tastes.
As for the whole roasted Ecu that Liza highly praised, it tasted slightly gamey with rich flavor that was unlike of beef or pork, and there was also the chewiness that she liked.
Since it seems that it was Liza who suggested the dishes on the plate, I also thanked her for it.

Feeling full, I decided to take a walk in the garden to help digest the food.
The dance is nice and all, but I take everyone for a stroll until the shining flowers path.

I saw Zena-san on the radar, having come to the party hall. Let's meet her there after taking

a lap back.
Checking on the map, it looks like she's with Miko Auna-san, Earl Seryuu's daughter.

"Hey, isn't that Mito-cchi?"

Where Arisa pointed, Hikaru was standing alone in the flower garden while looking up at the sky, looking like she was enduring not to cry.

"Mito."
"Ah, Ichi--Satou."

When our eyes meet, Hikaru made a forced smile.

"Did something happen?"
"Un."

Hikaru shakes her head to my words.

"Were the king's family being mean to you?"
"Ahaha, nope. Everyone is a good child."

Hikaru laughed and denied Arisa's question.
However, it seemed her smile was forced, she quickly stopped laughing and looked languid again.

"But, they are all really good children, it makes me remember Sharlick-kun and the others--"

--Hikaru who was able to cry muttered.

I hug Hikaru's head, and let her cry as much as she wants.

Sensing the scene, Liza took the girls besides Arisa to the nearby arbor.
It seems Arisa is on a monitoring duty so that there won't be a strange mood happening between Hikaru and me.

I felt the presence of the wind when I was calming Hikaru.
It was not a poet, it was probably the wind magic [Wind Search].

"Ah, Zena-san and Liza-san."

And then, Zena-san appeared from the arbor when Hikaru had wiped her tears.

"Satou-san... Huh? You're with Mito-san today?"
"Yes, she was feeling unwell from the crowd, so we were just enjoying the night wind for a bit."

Right, I introduced Hikaru as my childhood friend to Zena-san.

It seems Zena-san had left the earl and Auna-san in the hall to search for me alone.

Liza who found Zena-san showed the way here.

And then, Liza wasn't only the one who found Zena-san--.

"Satou?! Yo-you were flirting again in this place."
"Huh, aren't they Karina-tan and Sera-sama."

Lady Karina who's together with Sera is walking here angrily. Sera is smiling, but I feel that her cheeks are twitching.

'There sure is a lot of shuraba-like situations today', perhaps thinking like it was none of my business was bad, even more bomb got thrown into the scene.

『Yamato? Shiga Yamato?!』

That voice came from Raka the <<Intelligent Item>> that was emitting blue light from the direction of Lady Karina's forehead.

13-37. Inauguration (2)

Satou's here. When it turned out that my friend was acquainted with my other friend, I feel that it often ended it with, "the world sure is small huh". However, it seems that it's a bit different in another world.

◇

"Huh? Is it Mastill? Is that beautiful girl your current master now?"
『That's a nostalgic name. If you know that name, then you're really not Yamato's descendant, but Shiga Yamato herself?』

--So Raka and Hikaru were acquainted?

Mastill is probably Raka's old name.
I block Hikaru's mouth before she could affirm it.

"U-um! Wasn't Mito-san Satou-san's childhood friend?"
"You there, is that true?"
"Ye-yes."

Sera-san keenly heard Zena-san and asked her.
Come to think of it, these two weren't acquainted huh.

"Raka-san, is she your acquaintance?"
『Yes, she was the king whom my master served many generations ago. I occasionally talked about her to Karina-dono, the Ancestor King Yamato is this girl.』

Raka answered Lady Karina's question.
There's no meaning in me blocking Hikaru's mouth now.

"You're too close."

Arisa who was watching the situation a step away pulled me and Hikaru apart.
For some reason Hikaru's face is red, but there's something that needs to be done first right now.

"Satou-san, I have a question--"

Sera-san started to speak with a serious face, but I put my index finger on her mouth to stop her.

It's possible for me to befuddle these three here.
Admitting that Hikaru is the Ancestor King Yamato, I can just tell them, "She has been tempered since she was little and becomes strong."

But now that I'm able to chant, have secured bases of operation, and able to manipulate the mind of someone who opposes me, there is no need to lie to my close friends.

"--You cannot turn back once you heard it you see? Yet, do you still want to know?"

Though that's only if the other party is aware of the disadvantage and wants to know the truth.

"Yes."

Sera-san answered without any hesitation.
Unlike her graceful looks, her character is straight-forward.
Even though Sera-san might dislike it if she heard it, but on this point, she might be similar to her older sister, Lady Ringrande.

"I want to know too."

Zena answered next.
It seems she was hesitating for a bit, but then she said those words with a clear expression.

"--I, I too, um.... I want to know about Satou too."

Lastly, Lady Karina answered with a shaken voice.

◇

"Well then, let us have a talk."

I asked Arisa to take care of Hikaru, and then brought the three to the [Mansion of Ivy] in Selbira the labyrinth city.
I couldn't go to Pendragon Mansion and Echigoya Mansion, and I couldn't think of any other place where there were illumination and complete protection against espionage.

"Th-this place is?"
"It's the『Mansion of Ivy』in Selbira the labyrinth city."

I told the truth to Zena-san who was the first that came to her sense.

"N-no way! But we were just in the Royal Capital!"
"Is it true, Raka-san?"
『I'm sorry, Karina-dono, even I am not that almighty.』

In order to calm them, we left the entrance hall for the parlor.
Leriril with sleepy looks appeared from the manager room when we were walking.

"Satou-sama! You have (haft) come!"
"Hey, Leriril. I'll be borrowing the parlor."
"Then, I'll get (gef) the tea (fea) ready."

Leriril sleeps early, so it's already hard for her to speak properly.

"Don't worry about the tea and sleep, I'll have the tea tomorrow."
"Fuai, goof nifht."

I put Leriril who was tottering to sleep on the manager room's bed, apologized to the three who were waiting, and settled down in the parlor.

"Um, who was the child earlier?"
"Ah, she's the manager of this mansion, Leriril a house fairy (brownie)."

I answered Zena-san's question briefly.

"The『Mansion of Ivy』of the sage, Trazayuya.... Then Satou-san is...."

Sera-san is muttering in low voice, scary.

I take some tea and cakes from Storage and line them up on the table, then begin the talk.
Looks like they were surprised with Unit Arrangement, they didn't even retort about the things that appeared out of nowhere.

"Then let me show you my true identity."

I might as well do this in chronological order.

"Once, I was the Silver Mask who exterminated the greater demon in Seryuu city."

I put on a blond wig and a silver mask while saying that.

Zena-san looks surprised.
Since I also wore them in Muno City, Lady Karina reacted the same too.

"Another time, I was the White Mask who exterminated the revived『Golden Wild Boar King』in the Duchy Capital underground."

This time I changed into a white mask with a smile on it.
Sera-san is hardened with startled expression.

"And, my true identity is--Hero Nanashi. I'm someone who was summoned from another world just like the heroes of Saga Empire."

Lastly I put on the violet wig, and bowed like an actor.
The three listened until the end without laughing.

"Thank you for listening to me. Do you have any question?"

I changed back into Satou and lightly asked them.
My mind felt lighter after revealing my secret.

"Satou-san."

Sera-san was the one who spoke first.
She takes my hands and continues speaking while shedding tears from her eyes.

"You saved me from the demon lord's hand."

'Save' is incorrect.
Because I had let her die.

"At that time, my power wasn't enough--"
"No!"

Sera-san interrupted me from denying.

"No, I am here because Satou-san took back my body from the demon lord's hand and lent your power to the『Artifact of Resurrection』."

Then, Sera-san stopped talking and stared at me.
I understand that her lips are trembling since our bodies are close to each other.

"That's why, let me say it. Thank you for saving me."

Looks like she was overcame with emotion from expressing her gratitude, Sera-san kissed me passionately.
It's just an innocent kiss where our mouths touch each other, but I can feel the passion of her feeling.

Being kissed by a pretty girl doesn't feel bad, but I'd like this kind of thing in 5-10 years.

Zena-san and Lady Karina looked like they were about to cry, so I lightly hit Sera-san's shoulders and separated our faces.

"I-I'm sorry, Satou-san. Suddenly, doing such a thing--"
"Please don't mind it."

I won't get angry from just a kiss as long as it's not like Arisa's style, aiming during a chance.
I'll get mad if it's done when I have a lover though.

"Do Zena-san and Karina-sama have any question?"

While apologizing to the two whose eyes were moist, I asked them.

"Sa-Satou-san is. No, is the name Satou an alias?"
"Right.... It is indeed an alias. My name when I was in the other world was Suzuki Ichirou."
"Suzuki Ichirou...."

Zena-san murmured my name sadly.

"However, my name when I got summoned to this world was『Satou』. Therefore, I think that my real name is Satou with this body."

It's a bit far-fetched, but I don't know the reason why my body got younger after all.
Arisa and the others call me [Satou] anyway, I think having Satou as my real name in this world is good.

Hearing my explanation, Zena-san nodded and said "Yes" while wiping her tears.
I'm glad that she understands.

"U-Um..."

Looks like this time it's Lady Karina.

"Will Satou return to the other world once you defeat all demon lords in the world?"
"I do not know that."

I replied Lady Karina who asked hesitantly with a vague answer.

"In the first place, I don't know why I was summoned to this world."

According to Hikaru and the others, the eighth person who was summoned by Princess Menea's kingdom was not me, but Shin boy.
Thus, the one who summoned me might be the Gods besides Parion, or perhaps even the Demon God.

The Dog-head mistook me for the Demon God, so there's a possibility that I might be the Demon God's offshoot (wakemitama), or an anti-dragon anti-god weapon.
This is just a supposition, so I haven't told it to anyone.

"Is that true?"
"Yes, I appeared near seryuu city several days before I met Zena-san after all."

I plainly answered Lady Karina.
I had talked about this to Arisa and the others, but Zena-san's reaction was a bit different.

"Then that『Stars Fall』was?!"
"Yes, that was a magic I used. I caused some uproar because of it."

I apologize to Zena-san since it caused an uproar in Seryuu city.

Afterwards, I answered several questions of the girls--for some reason, they asked whether I had girlfriends in the former world.
I thought it was a meaningless question since right now I have Aze-san as someone in my mind, but I answered properly regardless.
I also touched my relationship with Echigoya Firm just like with Hikaru. Zena-san who learned that the identity of Kuro was me was surprised with rounded eyes, but she didn't react in an extreme way like Sera did.

After answering many private questions, and when we were going back to the royal castle's garden, I remembered one thing I forgot.

I have to ask them to promise not to tell anyone my secret.

"--This is all of my secret. Would you promise me keep them a secret?"
"Yes, I will absolutely never reveal it."
"I'll keep it a secret even if I have to defend it with my life!"
"I-I also won't tell Satou's secret to anyone."
『I too pledge that I will never disclose it.』

The three people consented with sincere faces.
Normally, I should have used [Contract] skill chantlessly here, but I don't want to do something that looks like a sneak attack on my friends, I'm thinking of believing their sincere friendship.

--Lady Karina seems like she would say it out loud inadvertently.

There are plenty of ways to deal with it even if that happens though.
If the other party has bad manners, then that means I just need to erase their memory with mind magic.

◇

And then, the day after the people who were aware of my secret increased by three, my companions and I got to receive rewards from his majesty for the [Floormaster] subjugation.

The rewards are the money from the auction of our loot though.

"Viscount Pendragon, as a reward for subjugating the『Floormaster』of Selbira Labyrinth Upper Layer, I grant you with 3500 gold coins."
"I will respectfully receive it."

Around 10% of the magic swords' sales huh--wait, my sense of money turned a bit strange.
I want to split the money to my companions equally. There might be times when they need money when they've become an adult after all.

Come to think of it, I don't think I've gotten the payment for the aerodynamic engine.
Well it's fine. There's the amount anyway, I'll make it a loan for 1000 years with no interest.

The team that subjugated the Middle Layer [Floormaster], Jeril's party, is on the campaign to Bishtal Dukedom, so the second position of the party, Mamoth-shi the scout received the rewards instead.

When I was going to step back after getting the reward certificate, the prime minister told me to stay.

"Next, announcing the new vice minister of the Tourism Ministry."

--No wait, you're virtually announcing that it's me by making me stay.

Sure enough, I could hear the nobles gossiping with my Attentive Ears skill.

"I-it can't be. An upstart viscount is the vice minister?"
"Impossible! Giving such a responsibility to someone with suspicious origin!"
"But I can tour the best!"
"Has his majesty lost his mind?"

Oy oy, putting me aside, if the last one was heard, you'd be executed for lese majesty y'know.

Moreover, what the heck is [Can tour the best]?
I'll befriend him if we can get along well later.

"I inaugurate Viscount Pendragon to be the vice minister of the Tourism Ministry."
"I will respectfully accept the responsibility."

I knelt before the king, and respectfully received the inauguration for the vice minister position.
I received the seal for the proof of the position, a scepter, and some medal-like thing. Looks like every one of them is a magic tool.

"We will bestow you attendant for it is a rigorous mission."

--Eh? I never heard about this?

Attendant is just a nuisance though.

13-38. Inaguration (3)

Satou's here. Having [Great Surprise] situation when I was working was an everday occurrence. Even so, I don't think that's an excuse to abandon the endeavor to improve the present situation. Mainly for myself.

◇

At the same time the king announced about the attendant, one of the chamberlain signaled to the entrance of the audience hall.
The one who appeared from that entrance was a woman in dress--.

The nobles in the audience hall rustled when they saw the girl.

"I believe you are in good term with Sir Pendragon."
"Yes, we are familiar with each other."

The girl answered the king while smiling.

"I appoint Sera Oyugock to be Vice Minister Pendragon's attendant."
"I respectfully accept."

--Oyugock?

As I was surprised, I checked, Sera's name had a family name on it.
Apparently, she was secularized this morning.

While kneeling, Sera-san glanced at me and showed a playful smile. It's a rare expression for the serious Sera-san.

"If there is someone that can receive the『Oracle』, you will be able to quickly sense it when the kingdom is in danger. If it's come to that, abandon everything and rush here."
"Understood."

I see, certainly they've been saved many times by Sera-san's [Oracle], so making her into a staff member is surely a good choice.
At the very least, it's better than having miko Auna-san, the daughter of Earl Seryuu, as the attendant.

I've confided her my secret just yesterday anyway, so there's no problem in having her in our journey together.

"And, we will announce the second attendant."

--Eh? It's not just Sera-san?

◇

I turned my head toward the entrance where Sera-san appeared earlier following the prime minister's words, but there's no one appearing.
Yet, the nobles around me have all been looking ahead since awhile ago.

When I timidly looked to the front, Princess Shistina had walked ahead of the royal family's line up.

--That can't be.

That wish of mine is unfulfilled, and the king says some heartless words.

"And, my daughter Shistina will accompany Sir Pendragon as a special envoy of the tour."

You serious?

Apparently the other nobles thought the same too, the place got filled with objection that bordered on being disrespectful from the nobles of pedigree centered around the young ones.
Unfortunately, I didn't take any notice of them, so I can't remember the details.
I only remember Princess Shistina sending ice cold glances toward the nobles.

"Be quiet! ■"

The king's words were tremendous, the nobles shut their mouth like their hearts had been gripped.

Oops, [『The King's Roar』 resisted] came out on the log.
Judging from the fact that I didn't get the skill, it was probably a magic originated from the City Core or an effect of a magic tool.

"I had intended for Shistina to just be an attendant in the journey, but I changed my mind after looking at your attitude. I will make Shistina be Sir Pendragon's fiancee."

Oy oy, how about my consent?
Please stop making a hasty decision like a young man who has no resistance against agitation.

Still, making a hasty decision is rare for the king--it can't be, but was it an act?

Perhaps by doing this rather than announcing her to be my fiancee from the get go, there would be fewer people complaining?
Either way, it's won me the animosity....

The silver lining is the fact that it's only an engagement, I'll reject it through Nanashi later.
Yup, that's good.

That's why Princess Shistina. Please don't show such a happy look on your face.
And also, Sera-san. Please don't look at me with those eyes. I only knew about it just now.

"--Sir Pendragon. I entrust Shistina to you, but the formal marriage will be in one year during the new year gathering. Until that, I ask you to act like a gentleman with moderation."
"At your will."

After a long winded talk typical of a parent with a daughter of marriageable age, I replied back with a short consent.

◇

I was caught in a barrage of questions from acquaintance nobles and my companions after the audience.
I only got released after the date had changed.

"Gueeeez, master (masfer) is too soft."
"That's right! I think not allowing me to take a bath together after I became of age is cruel! I also want the opportunity to appreciate Master's collarbone!"

Putting aside Arisa, Lulu who's also drunk grumbled some incoherent things.
I can see how they are sisters when they're like this.

"Master! It is possible for humans to mate with homonculus so I inform, inform, inform...."
"....Kuh"

Nana repeated words like a broken record toward Liza.
Looks like Mia was fast falling asleep.

"Unyu~?"
"Pochi wants to be a bride too nodesu."

I pat Pochi and Tama's heads who were sleep-talking.

"Arara, everyone is asleep?"
"Isn't it because you let the children drink the sake?"

As a punishment, I made Hikaru to do the clean-up.

"It's fine. If you don't let them moderately loose for such a dissatisfaction, they'll fall out of the cogs of human relationship."

Oh, Hikaru is an adult.

"Fufuhn, are you surprised? After all, how many years do you think I was a hero?"

'It's okay to fall for me', she boasted, I lightly hit Hikaru's crown of head with a chop, and then went to sleep for the day.
Good grief, it's like there are two Arisa now.

◇

Afterwards, I spent busy days for half a month.

"Can I leave it to you?"
"Ou! I take pride in tempering spoiled children like him. Moreover, Semeri is having fun too."

Two days after I was inaugurated as the vice minister, I went to Armor's place in the lower layer of the labyrinth.
Shin boy who's just recovered is running in the site for military drill in the area that Armor rules.

"Damn it, why do I, have to do this!"
"Oh, you're still energetic huh. Tsuntsun-maru, ya can raise the speed a bit more."
『TWEEEEN』

The vampire princess who's in her rebellions phase, Semeri, is chasing Shin boy while riding on a multi-legged sea anemone.
Looks like she has a sadistic tendency, she's training Shin boy while looking truly happy.

When I was thinking of punishing Shin boy who almost did a genocide in the royal capital as a demon lord, Armor who came visiting Ban's castle took up the job to reeducate him.

"This was my specialty in the former world."

Accepting Armor's suggestion, I decided to entrust Shin boy to him.
I gave materials and food together with a refrigerator magic tool needed for the reeducation from the storage to Armor.

In addition, as a thanks to Armor whose figure is that of a full-body Orichalcum armor, I plan to present him with a full-size replica of the mecha ridden by the protagonist of an anime that he liked in his former world.

Furthermore, I was able to make sushi roll with dried gourd for Yuika after getting the recipe through [Lost Knowledge].

◇

And, the majority of the members of the carefree occult group [Wind of Liberty] that assisted the disturbance in the royal capital ended up in the prison.
Through the inquisitor, the ones who were found guilty were executed for the crime of treason, ones who weren't were charged with harsh punishment like stripping of peerage or assets confiscation.

Of course, the house of Souya boy who sheltered the person who was the epicenter of the red rope monsters in a detached building was to be disposed of.

As Nanashi I was able to somehow save their life besides the head of the house, though I couldn't say that it was because he's my acquaintance.

It doesn't end up in their acquittal though--.

"Kuro-sama, my name is Yui Akasaki. Please take care of me and my husband, Souya."
"....Pleased...to...."

Souya boy who has been deprived of his recognition as an illegitimate child of the late king has become like a cripple.
As long as an existence like Yui is beside him when he's at the rock bottom like this, he's probably going to move forward before long.
Their positions are that of crime slaves, but they're going to get an amnesty from the king in a few years, at that time I plan to release them from slavery.

It's a bit hard, but I've employed a lot of people with similar situation as them, so they should be able to get accustomed with it before long.

◇

"Are you firing me ssuka?"

That reluctant words hit me when I called Nell, the life magician of Echigoya workshop, and told her, "I'll release you from slavery."

I deny it as Kuro.

"Don't be foolish. I've heard from the workshop manager Porina that you're working well, so it's a reward. Work as the section manager of the life magicians from now on."

Porina has gathered around 20 life magicians, so she's going to work them.

"I'll work as hard as the legendary『Corporate Slaves』ssu."

After tearing off Nell who clung to me during the confusion with hardships, I told her, "I'm counting on you", and then left the workshop.
I wonder if that 'corporate slave' thing are words left behind by some past hero or reincarnated person?
I'd have liked if they didn't brought the term from hard life.

As for the workshop, they're currently increasing production line for the instant food suggested by Aoi boy.
Copy products of the kickboard will appear in the market sooner or later, so I'm thinking of making the instant food as our top product.
The powder soup is especially popular among peddlers, I plan to sell them in the branches office in Shiga Kingdom next time.
The woman underwear suggested by Arisa is also doing well.
Right now, stockings can only be made in the workshop of the Ivy Mansion or with my magic, so it's going to be awhile before we can commercialize it.

In addition, knowledgeable slaves of Echigoya Firm increased explosively in the Royal

Capital, so the lack of personnel in the branch offices and the workshop is getting better.
The manager told me that we have bought the ruined workshop in the downtown and are currently enlarging the venture and building Royal Capital's orphanage at the same time.
I'd like them to work hard but not to the degree of overworking.

◇

"Viscount-sama, this is the site of the House of Earl Muno."
"It's quite wide."

Lady Karina and I have come to the site of the House of Earl Muno where the mansion is going to be built.
Today, we're planning to create the mansion's wall with a famous construction magician.

"Then allow me to begin. ■■■■...."

I memorize his spell with ear copy.
It's quite long. Remembering it is going to be difficult.

"....■■■■ Create Fort Wall"

The construction magician swings his wand, and then a wall is appearing from every direction of the site with great speed.
Advanced magic is quite amazing. The construction magician has used up all of his MP with that one.

"Fuuh, next is the decoration, but since my magic power has ran out, it is for later--"
"Here you go if you would. It's a magic power recovery potion from Echigoya Firm."

I, who couldn't wait until later, took out a magic potion from my bag and presented it to him.
The magician hesitated, but when I was going to put the potion into my chest while muttering, "It's a intermediate level magic potion of Trismegistus....", he agreed to continue even while his face was looking truly complicated.
The race called magician can't hold back their curiosity after all.

That day, I got all kinds of magic; wall creation, ornament creation and a small detached building creation that's for the manager, so I was quite pleased.
These magic are fruits of individual research, so I put a note reminding me not to teach it to others. Copyright is important.

As a thanks, I gave him a lot of magic potions to the magician.

◇

Even ignoring Hisui who raided during the mealtime, I didn't expect the truck-sized infant dragon would come visit the royal capital too.
I'm glad that it was when I was doing some work in Echigoya Firm.

The black dragon Heiron would eventually come to visit here, so it might be a good idea to create a secret base somewhere.
Let's postpone the construction of the aerial city.

I suspense my thought, and return my attention to Arisa and Mia who are running from beyond the hill of the Royal Capital's outskirt.

"Master! Athena had came to call us."
"Nn, Synchronous Magic."

Following Arisa and Mia, we're going to visit the royal court magician--Shiga 33 Wands during the magic practice.

Shiga Kingdom has been really peaceful for the past half month.
The Royal Capital reconstruction has also been completed thanks to Echigoya Firm bringing a large amount of material.

It'll be nice if the peace continues on like this--.

Intermission: Want to Practice Magic [Orb Arc]

Satou's here. Mistakes of youth, anyone has done it. Use that experience to leap and fly toward the future. Although there are also lessons that are too painful in the world.

◇

"■■■ Breeze"

Storm rages in the narrow alley, sweeping the fainted subordinates of the phantom thief to the berm along with garbage.

Kukukukuku, I couldn't suppress the overflowing delight welling up from my body.

I carefully put the [Chant Orb: Used] that had lost its transparency to my Storage.
I want to immediately use thi~s, or tha~t spells I've finished developing, but it'll be a great disaster for sure if I do it in the royal capital, so I restrain myself.

In order to chant without reserve, I went back to the auction hall with Unit Arrangement to settle my business.

"Kuro-sama, welcome back. How is the--no, I couldn't help asking."

It seems the Manager guessed the result from my look.
Ignoring the people in the auction hall behind the Manager who are being surprised, "Teleport magic?", I return the stolen Orbs to the man in charge of delivering them.

"T-this is the Orbs!"
"I got them from the phantom thief. I've taken the orbs that I've won in the bid.

I tell the bidders and the staff members who are thanking me, "It's unnecessary", over my shoulders, and then teleport to Echigoya Firm together with the Manager.
I forgot about Female Executive A, but well, there's the carriage anyway, she probably will go back alone.

"Kuro-sama, we're going to celebrate tonight."
"The preparation has already been completed."

Tifaliza continued for the manager who spoke with a lively voice.

"I'll be going out for some business. Begin the party ahead of me, if it looks like I'm returning late."

After telling that, I moved to the desert to the west of Selbira city with Unit Arrangement.
Oops, before absorbing myself in the experiment, I have to contact Arisa and Liza.

"■■■ ■ ■■ ■ Short Message"

Unlike the [Telephone] that I usually use, this is a space magic that can send one-way short sentences.
The magic can only send up to 128 characters, so it can't convey intonation of words. It's similar to phone mail.

Even though I only sent,『Succeeded bidding the Chant Orb. I'll be late returning home since I'm going to experiment with magic, so go ahead and eat dinner first.』, for some reason Arisa replied, [You're too frolic (lol)].
I wonder if I used to many emoticons?
I don't understand--.

Well fine. Now it's free time until sunset!

◇

I picked the vast desert to the west of the labyrinth city as the experiment site.
There wasn't any direct damage to the surrounding countries during my fight with the Dog-head, so using advanced magic here should be fine.

--No, the people of the Royal Capital were panicking since they could saw the Meteor Shower from afar.

I choose the most suitable magic in the magic book.
Using, the forbidden spell of space magic [Another World], I create a copy of the desert in the sub-space.
The size seems to depend on the magic power used, so I make it 10 kilometer wide for the experiment. If I use holy swords as battery replacement, it seems possible to create the whole desert for the maximum size.

I won't have to worry about damage in a sub-space, and there won't be any witness.

When I entered through the Gate, I reflexively thought that the magic had failed since the inside wasn't any different at all to the desert just now.
Even the sun is in the sky.

According to AR, that sun seems to be a picture.
Confirming on the map, it's read as [Satou's Sub-space: Desert]. Looks like it's not an [Area without Map].
Confirming on 3D reading, the sub-space's shape is spherical.

Now then, now that I've secured the place, let's begin the experiment.

Whirling sands would be a hindrance, so attack type magic would be for the last.
First, let's go with Creation type magic--.

".....■■■■ Create Golem"

The ground of the desert is rising, forming a doll (human).
Before long, a Golem that looks similar to Mia's Sand Giant complete with the decoration is finished.

The Golem's height depend on its level if you don't specify it. It's possible to create a high-level small Golem, but the less mass it has, the weaker the Golem becomes.

According to AR reading, the Golem's level is 50. According to magic books, the created Golem will be 70%-80% of the user's level, but it seems there are other conditions besides that.

--Too bad.
Many things would be easier if I really could create level 249 Golems....

"Perhaps the maximum level is limited by its material?"

It's a game-like way of thinking, but it sounds normal in this game-like world.
I tried sand, wood, stone, bronze, and iron in turns, but their maximum levels weren't much different. Unexpectedly, only iron had low maximum level.
When I checked the wreckages of Iron Golem inside my storage, turned out that it was a stone Golem with iron plates plastered on it.

Checking the magic books I have in hands, it seems that the level changes depending on how well the material can channel magic power.
When I tried using magic metal and material from Jewel Golem that Nana gave me, I found out that it could go up to level 99.

Looks like Golems created from magic stop operating in two hours after their magic power supplies are cut, but you can make them permanent if you use magic cores as the power source when using [Create Golem].
When the magic core method is used, the Golem's level is dictated by the level of the monster the magic core comes from and the magic core's grade.
It might be usable for power-leveling, I'll do some experiment with it later.

Nevertheless, magic is convenient.
I can make Golems in an instant from now on.

The Golems in the underground vault of Echigoya Firm were created by diligently making their magic circuits, and it took even me three days to make one. It took me 10 days to make the Orichalcum Golem....

It seems the Golems created by magic can only move sloppily and can only perform simple orders though.
While healing my gloomy heart with those words, I began the next experiment.

◇

When I release the sealed Spirit Light, colorful spirits gather to me from the surrounding.

There are fewer spirits than usual, perhaps because it's inside the sub-space. Around 20% of the usual number.

"....■■ Beast King Creation (Create Behemoth)"

--PUWAOOOOWWNNN！！

I tried calling Behemoth using the spirit magic Mia taught me.
Its level is 52, slightly stronger than the Behemoth that Mia and Aze-san summoned.

As a test, I made Behemoth lightly battle against the Golem army I had just made earlier.

The lightning that Behemoth preemptively shot rushed down the Golem army with a roaring sound while spreading ozone smell.
However, it only damaged the surface of the stone and sand Golems, they didn't get any serious damage.
The Golem army is approaching Behemoth while raising cloud of dust.

Behemoth raised a war cry, and then stretched its elephant-like nose, attacking the Golems like a whip.
The sand Golems were torn in two with a hit, but they regenerated in the next moment, returning to their original forms. They're quite tough.

And then when the distance was enough for close combat, an uncouth exchange of blows like a confrontation between kaijus began.
Behemoth's hoofs, tusks, and long nose tore, stabbed, and struck, and the Golems regenerated every time.
The Golems struck the large indomitable building-like body with their machine-gun-like fists, but since Behemoth's body was only semi-materialized, their attacks never reached it.

I continued to chant many magic, registering them into my Magic Column while this seemingly endless battle continued on.

At first, it looked like it was a close battle, but ultimately it was a complete victory of the Behemoth.
Having diverse way to attack, and an AI that fights by utilizing attacks that are effective, the artificial spirit is stronger.

However, the advantage of the Golem is that you can create an army beforehand as long as you have a lot of magic cores.
Use Golems if it's against a lot of weak enemies, and the artificial spirit if it's against a few powerful army, that should be the correct way.

Next, I tested Soul magic.

I'm not good against zombies and grotesque things though, so I only took out bones and shells from the leftover of dismantling jobs from my Storage and used [Create Undead].
With this magic, it seems that the level of the undead depends on the original level of the

remains, the stronger the monster of the remains the stronger the undead becomes.
Just like the Golems, they become permanent servants if you use magic cores.
The stench is unbearable if it's anything besides the ethereal body type and bone type undeads though, so I probably won't have any use of them.

Rather, [Summon Skeleton] and [Summon Litch] magic that don't need corpses to use seem more convenient.

>[Summoning Magic] Skill Acquired.

For some reason, I got [Summoning Magic] skill even though I used soul magic.
I don't understand, but well it's good.

For the occasion, I wanted to summoning magic that humans use, but the ones in the magic books I have only have the inferior version of the spirit magic ones, so for now, I only registered the useful-looking, [Summon Messenger Pigeon] and [Summon Spy Rat] into the Magic Column.

I can freely move these servants with Unit Arrangement.
I peeked at [Unit Creation] with some expectation, but it was grayed out and unusable like usual.
Really, I wonder what's the release condition of [Unit Creation]?

◇

I got tired of watching servants war, so I decided to try using peaceful magic this time.

".....■■■ Create House"

After finishing chanting a long spell, sands rise up from the ground, creating orcher structure in a flash.
Magic is nonsensical like always.

When it's finished forming, the sand harden into stone-like wall, and there are even some parts that have changed into marble-like things.

At first I thought the windows were transparent, but then they changed from fully transparent to semi-transparent frosted glass-like.
I understand after entering the house that I can look outside through the glass window from inside.

The appearance is simple, so I'll need to take extra steps for the decoration and outer appearance.

"However, you can't call this a house eh--."

I murmured alone while looking up at the completed fort.
I deem it good as it's convenient.

This gets me interested, so, after confirming that the advanced magic earlier has been registered in the Magic Column, I try chanting [Create Village].

After I've finished chanting the spell that's as long as a novel's chapter, the ground is rising at a grander scale than the [Create House] earlier.
The area is about as big as a city.

I can't see the magic process well since a lot of sand is dancing in the air, due to using the magic in a desert.
I thought of using wind pressure magic to scatter away the sand, but it looked like it'd blow away the building that were under construction of [Create Village], so I endure it.

Eventually, a lot of houses divided by Igo board-like grid's alleys appeared beyond the cloud of dust.

"This scale isn't a village, it's a city...."

However, unlike [Create House] which upgrades a house into a fort, in [Create Village]'s case, the [Number of House] increases instead.
The countless houses that are lined up all look similar, boorish-looking one-story house of hollowed cuboid shape.

"Let alone a castle overnight, it's a city overnight huh."

While talking to myself, I take a stroll in the city.
Of course, I continue to register low grade battle-type magic and life magic into Magic Column while taking the stroll.
It seems I can't suppress this efficiency maniac habit when I'm not with everyone.

After taking the stroll, I understand that this [Create Village] magic has a fault.

There is no infrastructure that's necessary for a city, perhaps because it's based on village.
There would be many problems as it doesn't have gutter to drain rain water and sewage.

On the other hand, I was surprised to see that water could be drawn from the well even though this desert was made.
The water vein should be considerably deep as I understand, so it seems the magic has interfered into the underground too.

I'll remodel this with [Create House] later.
Right.... Naming it [Create Kingdom] sounds fun.

◇

When I had finished registering non-battle type magic into Magic Column, I proceeded to the real advanced magic experiment, but--.

『....■<<White Inferno>>』

With dazzling flash, and speed that exceeded the speed of sound, the white glittering flame evaporated the desert's sand.
The flame reached the other end of the sub-space, and went back to me along the wall.

--CRACK.

The sub-space was broken together with the sound of cracking glass.
The flame trampled the dimension fissure, wrenching open the gate that connects the sub-space, spouting out to the desert of the original world.

"This is bad--"

I hurriedly canceled the magic, and erased the white flame with [Neutral Magic].
Even though it was one of the strongest advanced magic, I didn't expect that it would burn even the sub-space wall.

Let's test it in a safer place.
I teleport to the tree house in Boruenan Forest.

"Hello, Aze-san."
"Satou!"

While having my cheeks loosened from seeing Aze-san who broke a smile when she saw me, I greet Lua-san and the cooking researcher Nea-san.
Including them, there are a lot of elves preparing for banquet in the living room.
It's a [Congratulatory for the Chant] party mentioned by Aze-san when I visited yesterday isn't it.

"Can you use chanting now?"
"Yes, fortunately--■■■ Breeze"

Minding not to obstruct the preparation, I went to the balcony and used a magic.
Of course, I paid attention so that the wind wouldn't turn up the one-piece dress that Aze-san wore.

However, I paid too much attention in that point--.

"Uwaa~"
"I'm blown away~"
"Halp~"

The pixies who flew to the balcony were blown away.
I quickly rescue the pixies with [Magic Hand].

"--Sorry sorry"
"There's no sincerity in that y'know?"
"That's right, my hair is a mess now."
"Geez"

Boo boo, the pixies were complaining, but they completely changed when I presented them with a newly developed sweet.

"Alright!"
"As expected of Satou."
"It smells sweet."
"Looks tasty."

They're truly energetic.

"Long candies right?"
"It's hard to eat them. Cut it~"

I cut the kintaro-ame, and then the pixies grabbed the cut and flew away somewhere while dancing around.
They probably want to show it off to the other people.

"It's mysterious isn't it? Why do the same face always appear no matter where you cut it?"

Seeing the cross-section of the kintaro-ame, Aze-san tilts her head seriously.
She's cute like always.

--By no means do I think that she's at the same level as the pixies.

A great person of the past said that cute is justice after all.

◇

After getting congratulated by Aze-san and the others for acquiring the chant skill, I talk about my real objective.

"Aze-san, I want to go to the void sky through the observatory of the World Tree, is it alright if I use it?"
"Yes, it's fine. Satou doesn't have to ask every time, you can use the observatory whenever you want."

The World Tree's observatory should be an important secret area, but Aze-san readily gave her permission.
Her supervisor, Lua-san beside her nods too, it doesn't seem to be a problem.

"Then, I'll go out for a bit."

I wave my hand to Aze-san and the others and then move to the observatory with Unit Arrangement.
I apologize to the engineer Gia-san who was surprised at my sudden appearance, and then jump out to the void sky--the space, through the pressurized observatory dome.

I've used the newly developed [Astro Suit] magic this time, so it's comfortable even in the

void sky.
It's a low grade magic, but since it's a composite magic that needs several elemental magic skills, only Aze-san and I can use it for now.

Now then, leaving that aside, let's start registering advanced grade and higher attack type magic to the Magic Column.
The world should be fine, but the world tree might be damaged, so I'm going away a bit more.

It seems there's little resistance with Flash Drive in the void sky, I've reached the satellite orbit in a flash.
Flying a long distance with Flash Drive consume a lot of fuel, so making an exclusive high-speed movement magic for use in the void sky might be a good idea.

Aze-san taught me during our stroll in the void sky that there is this Ether Stream which is the bare form of the Dragon Vein flowing from the direction of the sun, and it's possible to restore your MP as much as you want if you can ride on that stream.

This time my objective is to test fire attack magic and confirm their power, so I've picked some place away from the Ether Stream.
I'm on to the noon side, but flashy light might be seen by the people below, so I create a jet black wall with shadow magic's [Shadow Wall] between the planet and me.

--Big.

A several kilometer long wall appeared.
I use advanced grade attack magic behind the shadow wall.

Chanting several spells from every elements, I register them into the Magic Column.
I don't really understand their power since there's no target for them to attack on. Perhaps I should make a magic that can create targets for test firing, like [Remote Decoy] or something.

When the registration had been going well for about 30 minutes, a World Phone call from Aze-san in the ground came up.

『Satou, how is it going there?』
"It's going well here. Did you see the flash of light from the ground?"
『--Light? Wait a minute.... I asked Lua about it, she said that it could only be seen if she strained her eyes.』

It should be fine if it's just that much.
Unexpectedly, the shadow wall seems to be invisible from the ground. I thought something this big would have been seen, but considering the background, the void sky, is black, it probably doesn't stand out.

『And also, actually--』
『Mou, how irritating. Satou, been awhile. Can I have your time for a bit?』

Interrupting Aze-san who seemed hesitant, the one who intruded in the World Phone is the high elf-san of Biroanan clan.
Besides her red hair, her face looks completely the same with Aze-san.

『Actually, an exploration scarecrow found a crowd of [Evil Jelly] in the deep area, we dispatched a phoenix to exterminate them, but it was exterminated instead you see. It'd have been a different story if they were near the World Tree, but the phoenix that could exert its full power shouldn't have lost to [Evil Jelly]....』

The high elf-san's voice had a tone like she couldn't accept it.

『So, I have a request for Satou. Could you defeat them for a bit? The reward is, right.... You can sleep together or get a kiss on cheek from me--』
『--Wa-wait!』
『It's a joke, Aze. You don't have to be that flustered.』

Aze-san is embarrassed with her frantic state.

Having drawn out such Aze-san is quite enough for the reward.
I'll vaporize those jellyfish, bring tens of thousands of them.

High elf-san continues the call before it's cut.

『Here's the real reward. I'll teach you the special Phoenix and Ifrit spells of Biroanan clan. They're far stronger than the standard Boruenan type.』
『Mwu.... Boruenan's Behemoth is more amazing mon.』

Aze-san who opposed like a child is cute.
While getting healed by the two's conversation, I head toward Biroanan's World Tree on the other side of the planet by going around it through the orbit.

A large amount of jelly fish are reflected on the radar as red dots on the verge of the map.
The range of the void sky map extends until the orbit of the moon but not the moon itself. Even though it's smaller than the earth's moon's orbit, the distance is still 30.000 kilometer long, so the extent of the map is an order magnitude higher than the ground's map.

It'll be troubling if there are a lot of them outside the map's range, so I head there with Flash Drive.

It's a bit too far, so I evaporated all the jellyfish on the map using advanced light magic [Photon Laser].
The flow of the log is too fast, I mask off the jellyfish defeat on the log.

>[Unidentified Object] defeated!

--Huh?

Apparently, there was another specimen mixed among the jellyfish.

I try to search the map by excluding the jellyfish.

An [Unidentified Object] is moving like it's chasing the jellyfish mass.
Its speed is equaling my Flash Drive.

I activate [Clairvoyance] from the Magic Column, that [Unidentified Object] comes into my view.

When it was suspending, it looked like a white spherical object with some strange protrusions, when it was chasing the jellyfish it was moving like a comet leaving a trail behind, and when it was predating, its pointed ends split into the shape of four feelers, attacking the jellyfish.

--It's totally like a kaiju.

Since we're in void sky, void sky kaiju? Or maybe we should call it a space kaiju?
I don't think that that thought is a flag, but that [Unidentified Object] found me, and came closer.
Fast. It was only a blink of an eye until it got here.

--Big.

It's at least bigger than the jellyfish.

I splendidly evade the feelers its extending to try to predate me.
Thinking that it might be able to talk, I tried to send some signal light with life magic's [Light] following after a masterpiece story, but it was no good.

I cut the feelers that persistently tried to predate me with Flexible Sword.
Holy swords don't have enough reach.

It was softer than I thought, but the cut part turned into a sphere and then reunified with the main body.
I wonder if it's a kind of slime?

Looking at the AR information, there's no new information besides its name changing to [Space Kaiju].

I don't mind it if it predates the jellyfish, but it'll be troubling if it pushes itself into our daily life.
It seems to be a primitive life form impossible to talk with anyway, let's exterminate it along with the jellyfish.

I use [Photon Laser] to annihilate the space kaiju and the jellyfish.
There's a bit of distance, so the Space Kaiju quickly moved erratically to avoid the laser.

--Nn?

Just now, the diffused light from the laser illuminated something.
When I concentrated the laser there, I could see a dark grey lump in the profound dark depth.
Looking at it relatively, its diameter seems to be around three kilometers.

Its mobility is low compared to the white ball Space Kaiju, but my laser can't hit it.
Looks like the surface of the dark grey Space Kaiju is distorted tight.

....I made light of the distance of the space.

Just when I thought that the dark grey Space Kaiju had become big before my eyes, it attacked at a speed I couldn't evade.
In a hurry, I evade it with short distance Unit Arrangement.

Fortunately, the Space Kaiju didn't seem to be interested in entering the planet's atmosphere as it corrected its orbit, but it'll be bad if that gigantic mass falls to the ground if I fight it leisurely.

I'll go with the strongest forbidden spell here.
I can't use the Meteor Shower since I can't make use of the planet's gravity.

Among the spells I have, there is one spell that exceeds the Meteor Shower.
It's an unfinished spell, but its immensity of the range and effect emulated in my mind is the strongest.

Theoretically, I'm also currently developing an Annihilation type magic, but it hasn't taken form yet. Moreover, Annihilation[1] magic feels too SF, its fantasy-ness is insufficient, I don't really want to use it.

We have magic and all.
I think it's important to be particular about the fantasy.

While thinking such a stupid thing, I evade the mysterious jagged light shot by the dark grey Space Kaiju.

Now then, let's prepare the forbidden spell chant.

This place is far away from the planet, but this distance is still close.
In order to prevent damages on the planet, I use the remodeled version of the space magic [City Guard], [Planet Guard].
After consuming magic power from two casted holy swords, the planet is wrapped in a huge defensive membrane on the low satellite orbit.
A light veil that looks like something I saw in an anime of the past spread as if wrapping the planet, creating a colorless and transparent dimensional gap wall.

Alright, the ground should be fine with this.

While chanting the unfinished forbidden spell that hasn't been named yet, I lead the dark

grey Space Kaiju far away from the planet with Flash Drive.
Apparently, the dark grey Space Kaiju is a rare POP-up monster that only appears as one.
The white ball Space Kaiju's number has increased since then, but the dark grey Space Kaiju hasn't.

When I've come to halfway through the satellite orbit, I invoke the magic with the planet on my back.
The activation range is 12 kilometer forward, truly space scale.

Flash of light is born together with the invocation.
While protecting my eyes from light so intense the Light-intensity Adjustment skill couldn't catch up, I grasp the situation around me with the Radar and Map.
The Flame of Genesis overflowed in the void sky, getting the dark grey Space Kaiju and the nearby jellyfish and white ball Space Kaiju indiscriminately eliminated.
It's useless no matter where you go. There is no escape from the vastly expanding flame.
The distorted defense of the dark grey Space Kaiju got thoroughly burned, and then it disappeared from the map in zero point several seconds.

--The convergence isn't too good.

The flame should have been extending in front of the invoked point in a cone-shaped form, but it spread in every direction instead.
Moving in accordance to Crisis Perception, I escape to the other side of the dimensional gap with Unit Movement.

I observe the flame from the other side of the dimensional gap that cuts everything but the visible ray.
Concerning the mystery as to how visible ray can permeate even though it's a dimensional, I'm thinking of analyzing it since it looks usable for many things.

Looking at its speed that's far slower than when it's spreading forward, the flame coming here seems to be only the waves from the after-effect.
The flame that touches the dimensional gap spreads on its surface.

With a snap, the location where the flame hit the dimensional gap cracked.
It'll take a long time from the time of invocation to its completion if I create another dimensional gap, so I directly put magic power into the dimensional gap to restore it.
Although, the Flame of Genesis's burst is limited to one millisecond long, so the flame quickly lost its momentum.

--Good grief, I'm relieved now.

『Satou! What was the flame earlier!』
『Hey, Satou, are you alright?』
"Yes, I've cleared up the things here--"

I lightly replied the World Phone calls from both Biroanan and Boruenan sides to ease their anxiety, and then ask the two a little request.

"I'm sorry but could I borrow the figure of you two?"
『Eh? Yes, it's fine but?』
『What do you want to use it for Satou.』
"The flame was a bit too flashy, so I wanted to borrow your mystical appearances to tell the people of the ground『Don't worry』."
『Ehehehe, mystical~』

Damn, you cute thing.

『Ah, that's easy.』
『Un, I'm fine too.』

They both agreed when I was in agony, so I go around to statesman and patriarchs of the area where the flame could be seen, telling them『Evil was destroyed through the works of gods』.
Of course, I showed the towns that were in panic the 3D vision of the high elves, calming them down.

It was good that my map range had increased, but because of that Arisa and the others' predicament reached me regrettably late.
From now on, I have to think more carefully when I'm doing magic experiments.

1. Annihilation can also be translated as 'decomposition'.

Intermission: John Smith

After separating from Mito and the others in Zetsu Earldom, I went toward the Royal Capital by mixing myself among the walking refugees.
I thought I would accomplish my goal there, but--.

"We cannot let you see Master if you don't have a letter of introduction. Go back to downtown at once, commoner."

I was driven out by the mansion's servant in a brusque manner.
The master of this mansion is a famous expert of magic tools--especially artificial limbs, I've come as far as the Royal Capital to replace my arm which was eaten by that damn mantis.

"Damn you gorilla, you'd look better in military uniform than a butler's."

After confirming that the gorilla had disappeared beyond the door, I stood up while cursing him.

"Letter of introduction huh...."

I try remembering my acquaintances in my mind.

Soutari, the long elf-kin who taught me the language of Shiga Kingdom. She's a beauty, but she's an undercover agent, no way she would have noble acquaintances.

Next is the old man innkeeper of Puta town. I was able to continue my journey after teaching mayonnaise recipe to that old man.
He bragged that he was friends with the lord of the town, but it was probably just a big talk, I can't count on it.

Come to think of it, after that, I journeyed together with a female guest of the inn....
Haah, that guy was the worst. She almost sold me as a slave after getting me drunk.... Haah, it'd been possible to buy noble position if I just had my smartphone and memo pad at that time.

I try remembering the people of Ash Rat Principality too.
That red helmet said that he was the elder brother of the chief, so he must have been of ruling classes, but the distance is too far, and even if I got a letter of introduction from them, I don't know how effective it is in a kingdom that discriminates demi-humans like this.

Next, I try remembering the people I met in Seryuu Earldom and Lesseu Earldom.
Wasn't Lilio's plain beauty captain-san a noble. I can't quite remember her name.
She looks like a softhearted person, I think she would write a letter of introduction for me if I ask through Lilio.

I recalled Mito who was sleeping in a mysterious ruin, but she said, "I'm not a noble", and in the first place, it's questionable whether she's a human or not, counting on her is fruitless.

Lilio and the others said that they were going to Labyrinth city if I'm not mistaken.
I vacate the restaurant that I lived-in, and board the stagecoach heading to the labyrinth city.

The old man who owns the restaurant told me to stay and marry his daughter, but I refused since it's not possible for me to cook.
I keep the fact that Lilio's face flashed in my mind when he talked about marriage a secret.

◇

"Is one-arm nii-san going to the labyrinth city too?"
"Yeah, I want to meet an acquaintance."

A kid who's sitting beside me in the coach talked to me.
Breaking my [Don't Talk to Me Aura] while I was blending in the background, he's got quite a communication force.

"I thought I should stop you if you said that you wanted to be an explorer."

The kid smiles befitting of his age while looking relieved.
I thought of getting a job in the labyrinth after meeting Lilio, but it looks like I shouldn't bring up that subject.

"A lot of my acquaintances went to the labyrinth city too, but it became half in a year, and there wasn't any one left in three years."
"....T-that sure is harsh."
"Yeah, it is. But, I'm different y'see? I was taught the way to fight by the town's gatekeeper. Defeating a goblin is easy as pie."

I said, "Is that so, do your best", to the boasting kid and shut my eyes.
What the kid was saying felt like it'd be a flag, so I talked to no one until we arrived in the next town.

◇

"Sorry, but this is as far as I can take you. From here on, you can walk to the labyrinth city on foot."
"Oy! What does this mean! Didn't I pay you to go until the labyrinth city?!"
"It's the viceroy's requisition. Give it up."

A man and the kid who were riding with me pressed on the coachman, but there's no way that a noble decision could be toppled in a kingdom that prefer nobles like this.

The reason for the requisition is probably the swarm of meteorites that could be seen in the western sky this afternoon.
The passengers were frightened, but judging from the time of the flash and the sound getting to us, the falling point should be more than 1000 kilometers away, so it was a needless fear.
It'd be a problem if the meteorite is as huge as the one that made dinosaurs extinct, but if

that happened, no use in running anywhere anyway.

I got tired of seeing the passengers harassing the coachman.
After asking for the reimbursement, I try to look for a wagon heading toward the labyrinth city.

Fortunately, within an hour I was able to ride on a wagon that was carrying shafts of spears, axes and hatchets.
It seems growing plants is hard around the labyrinth city, so these kinds of woodworks are carried from the neighboring cities.

It might be a seasonal thing, but there's a lot of young people heading to the labyrinth city.
From children younger than even junior high school students to ones who are of high schooler age.

"There are many explorer applicants this year."

The peddler who's driving the wagon talked to me while gazing the young people walking on the street.

"--Is that so?"
"At this time of the year, it's usual for many youngsters who aspire to become explorers to come out of the woodwork every year, but this year there are some people who defeated『Floormaster』and became nobles. A lot more kids are probably inspired by it."

I see, not American Dream, but Labyrinth Dream huh.
While thinking such a thing, the wagon entered a village protected by barrier pillars. When the wagon stopped at a square, a village-head like man in good clothing negotiated something with the peddler.

Judging from the pattern of our lodging in villages so far, he's probably negotiating the rent for the wagon, water well, and selling woods for the fuel.
The price for these is just several big copper coins, but it seems to be an important income for the village.
The peddler traded some things required by the village like ointment and nails to decrease the cost.

I watch the back of the wagon for thieves while the peddler is negotiating.
According to the peddler, the danger of thieves is more prominent inside such a village than during the journey.
During the season where a lot of youngsters are heading toward the labyrinth city, the Royal Capital's knight order regularly patrol the highway, so thieves and such hide themselves far away.

Besides us, there are a lot of youngsters in traveling clothes doing preparation to camp in the square.
That said, their 'preparation' only consist of them putting their mantles on the ground and napping on it, or preparing for meal. There are a lot of people who are only making bread

porridge that consists of dried vegetables and black bread stewed together.
It seems to be normal around here, but I was surprised when I saw black bread being stewed for the first time.

"Thank you for waiting. Let's have a dinner. Can I leave it to John today too?"
"Yeah, leave it to me."

I draw water from the nearby well, and then put it on the pot on top of the stove the peddler put.
When I have the fund, first thing first, I'll make hand pumps and spread it to villages.

The moment bubbles came out in the water in the pot, I put cereals and jerkies to make a risotto. The lump broke when the hot water boiled, and good smell from the spice overflowed.
The other people in the square are looking here with envious look, but we don't have enough to split for them.

It's the peddler's job to put the cooked instant risotto to the bowls.
It's troublesome with just one arm you see. I'd eat directly from the pot when I was alone.

"Yup, it's good. Don't you want to sell this? I think it'll sell well."
"Sorry, but it takes too much effort to make them."

I bluntly declined the peddler's offer for the umpteenth time.

I do want to mass produce it and get some nice profit, but I just don't have enough fund.
There's no doubt that I can profit a lot if I cooperate with someone, but I can only see the future where my partner runs off with the profit afterward, so I don't intend to cooperate with anyone.

I once heard that Echigoya Firm in the Royal Capital is buying idea, but I don't want to get close to it.
Someone who named his firm like the name of a [corrupt merchant in a historical drama] can't be good.

From I heard in the rumor, the firm seems to be peerless even against nobles, there's no doubt that he's probably a reincarnated or a transported person with administration cheat.
Sooner or later, it looks like I'll clash with him, but if possible I want to do it after gaining enough power to.

◇

After crossing the mountain range before the labyrinth city, I saw the labyrinth city and the bald mountains behind it beyond the wasteland.
There are more mountains even beyond that, and it seems to be the desert after that.

Now I can finally rest easy from any more mountaineering.

As we get closer to the mountain foot, the temperature gradually rises.
Sheesh, the climate of this world is too free. It makes me doubt whether it's round.

The temperature rose every time we got closer to the labyrinth city.
It's almost unbelievable that the other side of the mountain is in spring climate.

"Geh, my water bottle is empty."
"No wonder when you drank that much. There's a well at the rest station you can see over there."
"You serious."

I feel like I'll lose to the thirst.
Sheesh, there should have been some vending machines if this is really a highway.

I miss being in Japan.

I look at the airships flying in the sky over head, trying to forget my thirst.
....Impossible. It won't be hard if I can forget my thirst by just doing that.

"If you're thirsty enough to look like you'll die, why don't you just drink from the beria over there."
"--Beria?"
"You don't know? It's the one growing along the highway with spines for leaves. You can pluck off its long thin body or the leaves."

I nod to the peddler, and collect the aloe-like succulent plants nearby.
Following the instruction of the peddler, I cut off the top tip, and then eat the emerald green flesh with a spoon.

"Yuck."
"Is it that bad?"

It's slightly sour on top of smelling grassy.
The coconut milk-like texture isn't so bad, but it's not something you'll eat by choice.

It feels like I'll get diarrhea if I eat too much of them, so I throw them away to the side of the road after quenching my thirst.

◇

The next day, we got into the labyrinth city after passing through a gate protected by huge stone statues.
I part way with the peddler on the main gate, and head toward the west Explorer Guild to see if Lilio and the others are there.

"Huh? Isn't it John."
"Lilio."

Looks like I have a good fortune.
The person I was looking for found me instead.

"What's wrong? Didn't you run after that beauty-san and went to the Royal Capital?"
"I have some business with Lilio--"

I told Lilio about the letter of introduction.
After telling me, "I think it's no good", Lilio brought me to Marientail-san, the captain.

"Letter of introduction?"
"Yeah, I can't ask them to make me an artificial arm without a letter of introduction from a noble."

Marientail-san's expression darkened after hearing me.

"I'm sorry. I am a member of nobles, but a letter written by a noble who isn't their relative will only get laughed off. It has to be at least written by the head of the house with baronage peer or higher..."

--No good huh.

"Can't Iona-san do it?"
"I'm from the house of a baron, but we're a branch family. If I wrote a letter of introduction carelessly, I might be scolded by the head."

Lilio tried to talk with her sexy-onee-san co-worker, but it was quickly shot down.
It's understandable, it's like asking a job from a former boyfriend of your friend if this were in the modern japan.

"Geez, you're really unlucky. It'd have been better if you came before Satou-san departed."

--Satou?

"What kind of person is he?"
"U~mm, you see--"

I'm convinced after hearing Lilio's story.
That guy is either a reincarnated person or a transported one. Moreover, judging from the story of Marientail-san's beginning of romance, the identity of the silver masked hero who had a fist fight with the greater demon in Seryuu City must be that Satou guy.

Considering it's said that he has black hair and plain Japanese-like face, he must be a summoned hero.
The current hero of Saga Empire should be called Masaki, so this Satou was probably summoned by another country.

From the story of Saga Empire's spy, Soutari of the long ear-kin, the people who were summoned by Rumooku Kingdom didn't have any cheat just like me, therefore, that cheat

guy must have been summoned by someone else.

Suddenly, I'm reminded of the meteor swarm from the other day and the [Stars Fall] thing that I just heard.
Did that Satou guy use it by any chance?
If that's true, then who the heck summoned Satou?

If he was summoned by a country, then that country would have used that power to unify the whole world.
It seems wars are happening on the eastern and western parts of the continent, but there's no sign of it in the center Shiga Kingdom and the neighboring countries.

Therefore, the summoner should not be a country.
Since he's fought against demons, it doesn't seem like the demons or the demon lords did it too.

....Perhaps, the summoner was the God?

I imagined such a baloney.

◇

Marientail-san offered to ask for the letter of introduction from that Satou guy, but I flatly refused.

Satou must be a cheat main protagonist type of man.
There's no doubt that disturbances will happen in the places where he's at.

I don't want to approach such a dangerous place.

Moreover, Satou's girl--Marientail-san is in this labyrinth city.
Applying tales to real life is dangerous, but from my experience, this world has high affinity with tales. This place should be safe as long as she's here.

Even if anything happened, Satou probably would appear to remove the danger before she got into crisis.

I remained in this labyrinth city with a reason unsupported by anyone.
Of course the reason is not just that.

"John, are you delving alone again?"
"Yea."
"Won't you go with us?"
"Sorry."

I refuse the invitation of a rabbitfolk who's wearing a blue mantle, and delve into the labyrinth alone.
My objectives are treasure chests.

Recently I've found pieces of magic recipe using beria's fruit inside treasure chests in shallow floors.
My intuition tells me that this is Satou-shi's doing.

From the rumor I've gathered in this labyrinth city, this Satou-shi guy is a [Good-natured Japanese]. That guy probably prepared the treasure chest event.

Putting that aside, searching for this recipe pieces is attractive.

Certainly the recipe will make me some profit, but there's another point to be excited about.
Several days ago, the viceroy of Selbira city announced that the explorer who found the last piece would be given the chevalier peerage.

According to the rumor in the city, this was initiated by the viceroy's follower, Baron Dyukeli, but even if they can't give me a peerage, a Marquis should be able to write a letter of introduction.

While checking my home-made map, I break through unexplored area.
It's going to be difficult for the day trip soon.

That said, exploring the labyrinth alone overnight is nonsense.
I can declare that continuing the exploration without sufficient sleep even in the best condition is impossible.

When I was thinking that I should go back soon, the stone monument in the passage began to blink.

--This is bad! It's a Gushing Hole.

I throw the stink ball to the ground, and run away from that place.
However, I was too impatient and didn't mind my steps.

The moment my foot stepped on a large slate on the ground, that slate broke, and a pit appeared.

I immediately threw the rope on my waist, but I had no hero revision that would make it coil around the passage's lumps.
The fact that it was not a vertical pit, but a sloping one was my sole help.

--I have a good fortune.

I wonder how many days have elapsed since I thought that.

It looks like I've fallen to the passage just after the Gushing Hole where monsters appeared.
According to the rumor in the labyrinth city, in 100 years, the only people who treaded upon the end of a Gushing Hole and came out alive were Satou-shi and his companions.

At present, every time I met a monster, I sneaked past ones I couldn't win against, and only fought against ones I could win like goblins and mock-wolf, while advancing through the underground passage.
This underground passage continued deep until a large room filled with spider webs, a dead end.
Of course, there's probably a passage on the other side of the large room, but I know that the goblins presiding in the large room would be my end, I couldn't bring myself to recklessly challenge them.

I was able to survive thanks to mayonnaise jar and rock candies that I always brought just in case, and water trickling on the passage wall.

However, it's getting bad.

I had ran out of mayonnaise on the second day, and the rock candy that I just ate was the last.
Above all, a mantis bastard got stuck on the trap right beside the water source. My life would be in precarious state if I couldn't drink water.
The special bullets, three remaining.
Although, even if I use the gun, there's no way I can win against that mantis bastard.

"Aah.... this is the checkmate huh."

A bullet for the death with dignity--.

"You half-dead person over there, can I have your time?"

--Is it an auditory hallucination?

"If you can give me the knowledge I seek, I can grant you one wish you see?"

--Or perhaps the devil?

Even the devil's fine.
Cure me from this thirst.

"Give me water."
"Here you go."

The water I got was a cold water that was so good it couldn't be expressed in words.
It feels like it's penetrating deep into my body.

After escaping from the extreme situation, I talk to the man with my brain that finally starts to work a bit.

"What do you want to know?"

It's fine if it's just the way to make smokeless gunpowder or internal combustion engine, but

it'd be bad if he asked the way to make nuclear weapons.
It'd be the worst if he asked the way to make potassium cyanide or sarin.

"Teach me how to make dried gourd."
"--Ha?"

I unintentionally let out a stupid voice.
What, did he just, said?

"You don't know how to make『Dried Gourd』?"
"No, with bottle gourd, you--"

I teach the man the way to make [dried gourd] while recalling it from my memories.

"I-it is that simple?"
"Yea, the『Dried Gourd』that you want for sushi roll should be with that recipe."

Apparently, he really wanted to know that.
I can't see well with my hazy vision, but the man's delight didn't sound like an act.

"Thank you! D-don't tell me you know how to make cola too?"
"Y-yea..."

I answered the questions the man asked.
I feel like I even answered knowledge that I shouldn't have known too, but that must've been my imagination.

◇

"Kuro-sama, this boy is?"
"Treat him like a guest of honor. I've promised him to grant his wish, so call me when he's awoken."
"Certainly."

I feel like I've heard those while being half-asleep.
The next morning, I woke up in a canopy bed that looked like it was made for nobles, and had a superb feast prepared by a beautiful maid-san for breakfast.

--This is a dream.

I should have been in the bottom of the labyrinth with no way to escape.

--This is the revolving lantern seen before you die.

I mean, my arm which should have been bitten off by that mantis bastard one year ago has been regrown.
I move my fingers and ascertain its touch.

It's fine even if this is a dream.

With both hands, I can create administrative cheat items that I couldn't create up until now as much as I want.

I noticed a letter by the pillow when I was trembling with delight.

Parameters like from Yamato Stone are written on the letter.

John Smith. It's my name in this world.
Level 13. It seems my level has increased by one during my exploration.
I recognized my skills too like, [Skill: Burying, Concealment, Evading], and the last was an unfamiliar one, [Lost Knowledge].

Looks like I got the skill in the labyrinth.
It seems my another world life has turned upward somewhat.

After leaving a thank you letter and a letter written with knowledge of cooking for my lifesaver, I left the mansion behind using [Burying].

My story in another world starts now!

SS: Liza the Magic Spear

Liza

Shiga Eight Swords--.

They're the strongest swords of Shiga Kingdom that eliminate demons.

I was taught those words by my father since I was small.
I would have never imagined that I would have a bout against that Shiga Eight Swords--much less, winning against one.

I, who still can't make Master go serious....

"Liza the Magic Spear, I'll let you serve under my earl house. I'll give you the same salary as a human knight."
"Liza-dono, I wish for a match. Oneself is Kajiro of Jii Gein style--"
"Are you interested in becoming a knight of the kingdom army? We'll welcome you not as a retainer but a holy knight."

Invitations for matches and solicitations came to me one after another.
I troubled Master each time that happened, I felt as thought my body shrunk.

I wonder how will Master think about it this time?
I'm worried Master who hates to be lionized by others would hate me.

Calming my upset mind, I practice the way of spear alone in the mansion's courtyard.

The Magic Edge lights up the dark garden.
Magic Edge that was once something difficult is now as easy as breathing.

If I told this to me from one year ago, there's no doubt that I'd be laughed off.

I shake off such an idle thought and concentrate on the basic form.

--Pierce, sweep, hit.

After finishing the basic form, I continue with the self-taught style I learned during the labyrinth city's battles.

I turn my body aside and then make a leg sweep with my tail.
I sink my body with not just my leg, but also my tail, making use my whole body as a spring, and then stab with my all.

Ending the form, I felt a presence appeared in one corner of the courtyard after I made the motion of returning the sword to its scabbard.

"It's wonderful as always."
"Master--"

Our Master appeared from behind a grove of tree where no one should've been.
I could faintly feel Tama's concealment technique, but Master's concealment is too natural I can't sense it at all.

"Was I a bother with the sound?"
"Not at all. The other girls are sleeping with such happy faces after all."

Master talked gently to me who was being timid as if reassuring me.

And, I put out cruel words to that kindness.

"If Liza is interested in Shiga Eight Swords, it's fine if you want to accept it okay?"
"Am I already unneeded--"

--How cowardly of me.

To think I said something like that while anticipating the gentle Master to deny it.

"No way. It'd be lonely if Liza wasn't here."

I let out a sigh of relief after hearing that.

"Nevertheless, I want to prioritize what Liza wants the most. If that's what Liza really wants, then I will respect that decision."

Kindness may sometimes becomes poison.
I understand that Master does not need anyone in the truest sense.

--Even so.

Even so, I want to be with Master.

I swear to my partner, magic spear, who's glowing red receiving my determination.

Someday, an existence that can be relied upon by the aloof Master, I--.

--Will become one.

I don't remember whether I was able speak those words in the end.
However, surely.

My spear knows.

SS: Satou's Inspection

With a cage filled with house mice that Tama and Pochi caught in the royal capital on one hand, I teleport to the epidemic prevention laboratory using Unit Arrangement.
This place is completely isolated from the outside world, so I can only enter here through teleportation.

I put on a white lab coat, and then take out one of the mice inside the cage with [Magic Hand].
The mouse looks around the room restlessly while squeaking.

"Chu?"
"Sorry, but I'll have you go along with the experiment."

I open the unwary mouse's mouth, and make it drink the upper grade potion mixed with my blood--Nectar with a bulb syringe.
The house mouse screamed and then it fainted.

Its small body looks like it's gotten a bit stronger, its health and stamina are about to run out.
I put some sugared water in the mouse's mouth, and then put it in a different cage than the first one.
The sleeping face of the mouse looks somewhat happy, but that must be my imagination.

I dilute the Nectar with water 10 times its concentration, and then make the next mice drink it.
There wasn't any who disliked it, but several of the mice collapsed.

After trying it with around 10 mice, I ended the experiment and put them in the third cage.

When I was about to continue the next experiment, I noticed that the mice in the cages had gotten up and were staring at me.

I wonder if it's just my imagination, I can feel intelligence in the mice's eyes.

The AR indicator showed that the first house mouse that I experimented with had its race changed to [Sage Mouse].
As for the rest of the mice I experimented with, three out of the ten changed into [Sage Mouse (Low)]. The other seven mice remain a mouse.

I let the other mice that haven't been experimented with to drink my blood.
They lick my blood with their small tongues, but their body aren't changing.

Next, I drip my blood into a new upper grade magic potion with various ratio, and then give it to the rest of the mice.
The house mice aren't changing just like with my blood.

Apparently, the problem is with the blood coming from the arm that has been encroached with the divinity from the Divine Sword.
I'm relieved that I don't have to worry about something like high human appearing after having some night life.

Now I can visit the pleasure quarter during the journey without hesitation.

◇

The next experiment is with the [Evil Philosophy].
I want to test what'd happen if I make a creature get close to a crystallization of miasma.

Of course, I'm doing it in a laboratory located on a different area than the earlier.
I'm using a small fly for this experiment.

When I took the small fly close to the Evil Philosophy, it quickly transformed into a huge monster.
It looked like it was going to attack me, so I created an elongated magic edge on my fingertip and cut the monster in half.

A whitish Magic Core dropped down from the cross-section.
Looks like there's no doubt that the miasma is the main cause of monster transformation.

I put the Evil Philosophy into my Storage, finishing the dangerous experiment.

There's no doubt that the ingredients of Fiend Drug, Ruin Grass and Decay Stem, are plants that attract miasma.
In other words, in the place where Ruin Grass and Decay Stem are being cultivated, wouldn't the number of monsters increase?

I'd like for someone to investigate it, but the Ruin Grass and Decay Stem are poisonous even in their raw forms, so it's dangerous for a normal farmer to grow it.
Moreover, someone could potentially misuse it if they knew that they're ingredients of the Fiend Drug.
Looks like I need to uproot these characteristics, and create ones, perhaps by selective breeding, that can't be misused.

It'll be hard if I can't find a researcher I can trust for this.
Princess Shistina probably would gladly do it, but there's no way I can let a princess of the whole kingdom to deal with poisonous plants.

It might be a good idea to ask the elf botanists.

◇

I head to the next laboratory with Unit Arrangement.
After using space magic [Extend Space] to secure the space, I lay out three-meter thick humus on the ground.

Normally I should've created a ridge, but I don't have any knowledge in that area, so I do it like this.

The experiment this time is the cultivation of the potato that's turned huge after absorbing the blood soaked in divinity.

Even though it's a giant potato, its species is neither [High Sweet Potato] nor [God Potato], it's still a potato.
I use the leaf of the giant potato I took out of the storage as a seedling.

I plant it in the soil, and sprinkle water on it.

There's no particular change.
Looks like it's not a strange seed like the giant potato that suddenly grew big.

In order to observe it, I made a Wood Puppet with magic and ordered it to watch over the cultivation, I decided to leave it for a while.
I've put up a light source with light magic, so there should be no problem with photosynthesis.

◇

『Master, where are you?』
"I'm in the lab."

Arisa contacted me with [World Phone].
I'm surprised that she could reach me at this distance without any relay. As expected of magic.

『Hm~m, can we go play there?』
"I don't mind, but it's a bit far, so I'll teleport you myself."
『Alright! I'm with Mia, so teleport us together okay.』
"Okay."

I move to the observatory room used for resting, and then bring Arisa and Mia there.

"Eh? Awawawawa--"
"Satou."

I receive Mia who jumped three-meter long.
I catch Arisa who's surprised with the sudden zero gravity, and lead her to the attached sofa.

"W-why is it zero gravity."
"Void sky."

Mia who was staring outside the observatory room shortly answered Arisa.
Yes, this is a laboratory I've built in the outer space to prevent disaster.

The laboratory where I was earlier is at 1G like on the earth by using gravity magic, but this is the lounge for receiving guests, so I've left it at zero gravity.

"Uhya, where can I see the earth?"
"I don't think you can see it since there's no planet in the visible distance."

I gave Arisa a drink in a tube while answering her.

"Hey hey, can I take out the juice from the tube and then drink it with a straw while the juice ball is floating in the air?"
"Yeah, there's no precision instrument here, so it's okay."
"Alright!"

This experimental satellite is a simple structure of a mass of rock I made on the ground, put in the storage, taken out in the space, so there's no danger with just moisture.

Arisa floated the juice ball, stabbed it with a straw and then began to drink it gleefully.
Seeing that, Mia imitated her.

"Haa, with this I can cross out another one from the things-I-wanna-do list."

Arisa who had finished drinking the juice satisfyingly leaked out a sigh.
Arisa requested, "Another one!", while grinning and sending a peace sign, so I take out my latest creation, fruit milk.
I actually wanted to take out the cola, but it was a big failure when I experimented on it alone, so I took this one out instead.

As we're at it, I invite the other girls too.
While swimming in the air, everyone is drinking the juice, or playing with the zero gravity, each of them are enjoying the unusualness the way they want.

I also played around with childish innocence after a long time.
Doing something like this once in a while is nice!

SS: The Phantom Underground Empire

I am Chuu Fat.
An excellent name given by my great master.

I said, 'chuu chuu', to gather my followers.
I distribute the cheese soufflé that the black-haired celestial maiden-sama has bestowed me to my followers.

The celestial maiden-sama is a retainer of my great master, she's an expert cook.

I take a bite too.
It's truly delicious.

This clear rich flavor melts my thought with my instinct.

--Cheese is dangerous.

When I came back to my sense, the cheese soufflé in the large plate had disappeared, and there were the figures of my followers sleeping with full bellies while looking satisfied.

I was thinking of using their favorite food to raise their morales....

Well fine, it's natural to sleep after eating something good.
I will also sleep for a bit.

◇

It has already been 10 days since I was given intelligence by my great master.
The three of my wives who evolved together with me have all delivered children.

It is good that the Sage Mouse species increases, but I ought to increase my servant followers too.

Fighting is all about number.
Because my mission is building an underground empire in this Royal Capital and presenting it to Master!

◇

The green devil hunted my servants yet again.
After having a fierce fight with the sewage rats in the underground tunnel, the expansion of our newly built underground empire on the surface was hindered by that guy.

In front of the devil that came sweeping down from the sky, even I, who's overflowed with intelligence, am not able to do anything.

--No, 'was not'.

It'll be different from now on.

Swoosh, I froze when I heard sounds of flapping wings, but my fear went away when I heard the 'chuu' afterward.
When I turn around, I see the figures of my sons.

I'm fascinated by my gallant sons who are riding on the back of the ravens.
They, the Raven Riders, are the elites of our underground empire.

There will be nothing that can stand against us who have attained mobility in the sky.

◇

--How could this be!

I can't believe that more than 10 strong Raven Riders got easily crushed!
If this keeps up, my charisma as the emperor will dwindle.

I cannot fail here.
I have to offer everything in this Royal Capital to my great master.

Chuu chuu!
I make a speech in front of my followers and servants.

Gununu, looks like it was too difficult for them, not only the servants, even the followers have fallen asleep.
These guys can't understand at all that the existence of this underground empire hangs on this battle.

I have my followers who are equipped with spears and shields to ride on giant ravens, and then I order us to take off while sitting on the throne installed on a giant raven.

The green devil quickly showed itself the moment we left the chimney.
Even while flinching to the sound wave attack, pirupiru, we gallantly stay in the battlefield without fleeing.

The magic spear long chopstick didn't faze the devil, and even the magic shield pot lid couldn't withstand the devil's beak.
Before I knew it, all of my followers have been defeated by the devil, my life is only a matter of time.

How could this happen.
To think I, who have been created by my great master, would lose my life in such a place!

--Piruru?!

The devil who had caught me in its talon looked up to the sky and cried.

--KYEWWROUUUN.

A giant monster bigger than the green devil fell from the sky.
The creature who landed before the devil, sat down in front of it, the reverse of what happened with me and the devil earlier.

How pleasant.
My life would end together with the devil, however, my descendants will inherit the empire.

Now, giant monster.
Eat the devil.

Covering my frightened heart with haughty words, I close my eyes and wait for my end.

"Huh? Why is the infant dragon in a place like this? What's this, Hisui is here too huh?"

This voice is of my great master!

--KYEWWROUUUN.
--Pipiru! Piru! Piru!

For some reason, the giant monster and the devil were delighted like me when they saw Master.
We look at each others....

Apparently, these guys are servants of my great master too.

As expected of my great master.
I will give my all along with Royal Capital to you.

Joining hands with the green devil the ruler of the sky, and the giant monster that resembles the legendary dragon, we will dominate all.

Please wait for a little bit of time, my great master--Satou-sama.
My loyalty will forever be with the great you.

SS: Excursion

Pochi

Today we're having a fun excursion nanodesu.
Once this excursion is over, Pochi is going back to the labyrinth city, she will part ways with Mabudachi and Shatei, it's sad nodesu.

That's why, Master and Liza said, "Make a fun memory", while sending Pochi and her friends off.

"March stop! We will take a break here. Upperclassmen of the knight school are to take care of their underclassmen."

When the lance corporal-san with blue beard shouted out loud, Mabudachi and Shatei fell down on the ground and made huff puff gasp noise.

"Huff, I never thought that walking in a forest would be this hard."
"You're really raised in the royal capital...."
"Look at Pochi-san and Tama-san. They're fine right?"

--Pochi and Tama?

It somehow felt like we were being praised, so together with Tama, Pochi took a shakiin pose.

"Oy, first year! Don't play around and rest properly. We're going to walk in the forest until the evening. Rest your body a bit now."

The head of the upperclassmen hit Pochi's head, giving her advice.

--Pochi is still quite alright nanodesuyo?

So I thought, but Pochi saw Tama made a [Don't say it] pose on her mouth, so Pochi kept her silence.

◇

Pochi can't get tired walking on the soft ground of the forest.
When Pochi played hopscotch, the upper class onee-san who acted as the rear guard scolded her, "Be serious."

--Something's strange?

Pochi listen with her ears twitching.
Pochi can't hear anything.

"Pochi~?"

Looks like Tama noticed the oddness too nodesu..

"It's strange nanodesu."

Pochi noticed too, she nodded to Tama.

"What do you mean by strange, dogfolk first year?"

Pochi answers since the upperclassmen head-san asked her.

"The forest is quiet nanodesu."
"That's because there are a lot of us moving in it, isn't it natural?"
"It's different nodesu. The presences of the pack of wolves that were tailing Pochi and the others, and the Eyeball Hopper that was looking here from beyond the forest both disappeared nodesu."

Even though Pochi properly explained, the upperclassmen head-san whacked Pochi's head nodesu.

"Don't say stupid things--"

The one who said stupid is the stupid one nanodesuyo?

"--If such packs of monsters were really there, the knight escort-sama and the corporal-dono should have told us."

Classhead-san whacked Pochi's head once again.

"Ouch nodesu."
"Stop being rash if you don't want to get hit."

Classhead-san muttered, "Dang stone head", with teary eyes while patting the hand which whacked Pochi.

"--Coming~?"

Tama noticed it first nodesu.
As expected of ninja!

◇

"Soldier Mantis appeared!"
"Damnit! It was hiding in a hollowed tree!"
"This is bad, the mantis's eggs have hatched! It's a flock of Child Mantis!"
"Students, make a circle and protect each other's back! Concentrate on defending, do not ever go on the offensive!"

When Pochi was going to eliminate the monsters, the blue bearded corporal-san ordered her not to.

Pochi turned around, Tama wasn't there.

"Pi~ Pu~"

Tama who had come back before Pochi noticed mimicked a whistle.

--Pochi knows.

That Tama is doing some ninja thing.

The presence of the War Mantis who was stealthily creeping from behind has disappeared, so there's no mistake about it nodesu.

"Corporal! Leave the small fish Child Mantis to us!"
"Understood! Us ten will protect the students even if we were to die here!"

Don't die.
Master always said so nodesu.

"Three Soldiers, 57 small ones~?"
"There are three Soldiers, but the small ones are 59 nanodesu. The two other children are being carried on their backs nodesu."

Pochi checked her answer with Tama.
There are too few enemies, the short sword on Pochi's waist feels lonely nanodesu.

"It's not use..."
"We can never win with just 8 knights and 16 soldiers."
"It would be a bit better if there were eight upperclassmen and 16 underclassmen."

Either Pochi or Tama can win alone nodesuyo?
Shatei who noticed that and said, "If it's Pochi-san and Tama-san", but he was scolded by classhead-san.

"First year! Did you forget corporal-dono's instruction? The only thing we can do now is by not being a burden!"

--He's tingling, scary nodesu.

"Senpai! We should ask the help of Kishresgalza sisters"

Classhead-san is glaring at Pochi with scary eyes.

Did Pochi do something to be scolded of?

"Hmph, not all Mithril explorers are strong. What are baggage carriers good for?"

Baggage carrying?

"Pochi is good at carrying baggage nodesuyo?"
"You heard that. First year be silence and sit down."

Even Master praised Pochi, "Pochi is really strong", nodesu.

"B-but, if this keeps up!"
"If you really want to be a knight, then know that your superior's order is absolute! Prepare to get expelled from the knight school if you get involved!"

Scolded by the classhead-san, Princess Kelten fell dejected.

"Students! Sorry! Five Child Mantis are heading there! We can't afford to turn our back to the Soldiers. You guys survive until we can help you!"

--Prey?

Pochi matches her eyes to Tama's and nods.
And, when Pochi was going to jump out with Tama, classhead-san glared.

"Underclassmen are to remain in the circle! Azzo, Orus, Urutz, Efna, gain some time by going one-on-one against the Child Mantis. It's alright, you guys can do it! Leave the rest to me! I'll reduce their number one by one!"

--No turn?

A shame nanodesu.

◇

Child Mantis's small sickle ripped the upperclassman's leg.
Blood comes out, it looks really painful nanodesu.

"Dame Pochi Kishresgalza and Dame Tama Kishresgalza."

Princess Kelten looks at Pochi and Tama with a serious expression.

"I ask you in the name of the sixth daughter of Marquis Kelten, Dyumorina. Please save senpais and the kingdom's force."

Pochi also wants to help, but the order is absolute nodesu.

"Senior's order is absolute~?"

Looks like Tama is the same too.

"Please yield on that part. I will bear all the responsibility. That's why, please--"

Tears from the princess eyes are...

"Please, Pochi. I'd take the expulsion too if it meant that."
"Please, Pochi anego, Tama anego! I will also go with you!"

Mabudachi and Shatei also asked together.

--This is the time to decide.

Arisa said nodesu.
Faced with what is right, zaru soba is courage nanodesu.[1]

Pochi will help everyone and get scolded by Master nodesu.
Three days without meat will be days of hell, but Pochi can't refuse Mabudachi and Shatei's plea.

"Pochi, let's do~?"
"Yes nanodesu."

If Pochi is with Tama, they're the invincible and the strongest nanodesu.

"Pochi will leave the many to Tama nodesu."
"Aye aye sir~"

Pochi will defeat the big Soldier Mantis nodesu.

"Uwoh, Pochi-san disappeared?"
"Tama-san too--there!"
"There's a lot of Tama-san?"

The voice from behind quickly drown out by the sound of battle.

"What? There's a small one!"
"Is it a new enemy?!"
"Red light?!"
"Don't tell me, it's a magic sword?"

The equipment today is the short sword [Bamboo Sword], so it's not a magic sword.
Pochi's magic bag has been left behind in the mansion.

But, it's alright.
Because Soldier Mantis is soft.

"As expected of magic sword. That hard Soldier Mantis's head was cut in one slash."

The knight person is surprised, but the only one who uses a magic sword is the knight's biggest-wig. Pochi is not.

Slipping through the second Mantis's sickle, Pochi cuts its legs, like zunbararin.

Pochi runs up its slanted body, and then pierces its head from behind, like doshu, ends.

Lastly, heading toward the hiding Assassin Mantis on top of the three, ju~mp and splash.
Green blood spreads out.

Pochi kicks the tree's trunk toward the safe area.
Pochi is already not the same from Pochi who cried from being covered in octopus's ink.

◇

There was a bit of trouble, but we had a barbeque with the wild boar Tama caught on the camp site, and defeated flame bug and had a camp fire, it was a really fun excursion nodesu.

Pochi wants to do it together with Master and everyone next time nodesu.

1. Pochi made a mistake citing Confucius's quote, should've been: "Faced with what is right, to leave it undone shows a lack of courage."

SS: Southern Island

"Eh~, the southern island isn't at the sea?"
"That's right. I haven't finished the reclamation, so if you wore swimsuits there, you'd have a bad time dealing with the bugs and the beach creatures."

When I told Arisa who came in swimsuit and swim ring like I was threatening her, the youth troupe who entered the room following Arisa turned right back to change their clothes.
I could use magic to defend against it as much as they like, but I decided not to say it.
We can play on the shore after I've prepared the sandy beach.

"Boo boo!"
"Don't complain with boo boo, go change your clothes. Once the reclamation is over, I'll prepare it so that we can have a vacation with swimsuits there."
"Ho~i. ....Don't forget your promise okay?"

Arisa went out of the room unwillingly.
It's unfortunate that I can't see the charming swimsuits of the youth troupe, but there will be many chances from now on, so let's postpone the fun for later.

◇

"--hot."
"This is the southern island after all."

I think it's around 38 degree?
It's only like an extremely hot day in Japan, so I think it's actually rather cool for this equatorial island.

"I feel like eating watermelon."
"Nn."

Arisa who's wearing explorer-like clothes made a request while looking like a dog during an extremely hot day.
I have a lot of watermelon stocked up from Boruenan Village, I'll take some out once the preparation for the reclamation is complete.

"Banana~?"
"Pochi wants to eat pineapple nodesu."

Tama and Pochi point their fingers to different directions while their noses are sniffing.
Looking at the map, I saw that Tama pointed at bananas, and Pochi was toward pineapples.
Both of them have good noses.

"Private Tama, Private Pochi!"
"Aye!"

"Yes! Nanodesu"

When I called, the two saluted back in military style.

"Using mowing equipment, constuct the Banana Highway and the Pineapple Line!"
"Aye aye sir~"
"Roger nanodesu."

The two took out huge orichalcum sickles out of their magic bags and equipped them.
They were spirited enough it was as if there was a clink sound.

"Charge~"
"There is no road in front of Pochi as it will be behind Pochi nodesu."

Moving at a speed that would put lawnmowers to shame, the two began to make way while pushing their way through the jungle grass.

"Isn't it faster if Master does it with magic?"

Arisa's opinion is correct, but using magic is too easy it's boring.

◇

While chewing the cooled watermelon and pineapple, we go around the unpopulated island on an open-type flying board.
At first we were exploring on foot, but on top of not having fun obstacles like bottomless swarms or wild beasts, there were a lot of mosquitoes and bugs in the thickets, so Arisa snapped.
It would have been fine if she was just making noise while grumbling, but we had to stop the on-foot exploration since she was going to burn down the whole island.

"Swish swish~. Summer means watermelon after all."

Arisa who's spitting the seeds while biting the red watermelon has a smile on her whole face.
Looks like she's back in good mood.

"Agreeing with Arisa, so I declare. Launching the seeds is fun, delightful."

Nana bites the watermelon with a serious face.
The fruit juice running along her cheeks to her breasts looks sexy.

"Master, please wipe it, so I appeal."
"Sure thing."

Looks like she doesn't like sensation of the fruit juice, Nana asks while pulling her front neck with one hand.
I readily consent and take out a handkerchief from the Storage--.

"Sure thing. NOT!"

Arisa barked toward the sky while repeating my words.

"Arisa, you'd fall down if you stood up suddenly. Master, I'll do it for you, so please lend me the handkerchief."

While scolding Arisa, Lulu quickly took the handkerchief from my hand and wiped Nana's chests on my place.
Lulu was between Nana and me when she was wiping it, so I couldn't peek at the fascinating valley.

--Lulu, what a frightening girl.

When I was imitating Arisa in my mind somehow, Mia came to me.

"Satou, a~n."
"Thank you, Mia. The pineapple is good too isn't it."
"Nn, good."

I chew the pineapple that Mia fed me.
The pineapples in this island have pretty good balance between sourness and sweetness. I feel that it's far more delicious than the pineapples circulating in the Royal Capital and the Duchy Capital.

"Pineapples are delingerous nanodesu!"
"It is, isn't it."

I agree to Pochi who's delightfully holding pineapple skewers on both hands.
Apart from that, Pochi. You mixed up delicious and dangerous you know?

The bananas that Tama brought were still green, so I made it ripe with an original customized version of the darkness magic's [Decay]. Magic really is convenient.

"Ooh, the green banana became yellow?!"

Seeing that, Arisa raised a surprised of voice with round eyes.
She likes to exaggerate like usual.

"Delish~"
"Pineapples are tasty, but so do bananas nanodesu."
"Nn, agree."

Beside everyone who's eating the bananas, Arisa made a cliche gag, "Do bananas count as snack?", and failed hard.

Since eating them just like that would be tiresome, I tried making banana shakes.
The shakes were very popular, but I ended up having to make watermelon shakes and

pineapple shakes too.

◇

"By the way, is it alright to leave Liza-san alone?"

Arisa asked while looking at Liza who was playing around with the sea monsters.
Looks like Liza is making use of magic armor to create magic snow-shoes to float on the sea.

It seems Liza will master Sky Drive before long.

"Strange. I asked Liza to help power-leveling Zena-san and the others on the shore."

There's no way that Liza would get tired and went to play around, she must have a reason for it.

"Ah, look look! She's waiting until Zena-san and the others have finished defeating the monster on the shore, and then lures another to them."

Arisa told the situation while pointing below.
I see, she's managing the monsters to make them fight Zena-san and the others in turn.

Liza is fit to be an excellent manager.

On the shore, Zena-san and Sera-san act as the rear guard while Lady Karina is the vanguard.
The front line can't be hold by just Lady Karina who's an attacker alone, so I've deployed 10 sand golems as their shields.

After encouraging Zena-san, Sera-san and Lady Karina who were doing their best on the ground, we went back to go around the island, I made the reclamation plan while holding the map on one hand.
There's an island as big as Awajima island in the large inlet, I'm planning to make a harbor and dwelling houses near the inlet.

"Might as well make a palace! One that's like the one in the Arabian Night."

Fumu, the one with fresh cream on top of it?
I'll ask Arisa to draw it later.

The other girls also give their varying opinion.

"House of cake."
"House of meat~?"
"House of hamburg steak is nice nodesu!"
"Master, house of stuffed toy is good so I appeal."

It's not clear which remark is whose, but they're imaginative ideas befitting of children.

"I'd like to have an oven and a steam cooker in the kitchen. I don't mind if there's no

washing machine, but I'd be happy if there's a garden with roof so I can air laundry even during rainy days."

Only Lulu gave a realistic opinion.
She's as reliable as a housewife who's buying a house.

When we went back to the shore to meet Liza and the others as the sun fell, Zena-san and the others were lying on the shade of trees.
It doesn't seem like a heat stroke, it's probably the level-up intoxication.

"There's a lot of meat, it's exciting nanodesu!"
"I'll help~"
"Pochi will also help with the dismantling nodesu."

Tama and Pochi ran toward Liza who was draining blood and dismantling the large amount of monsters in the shore.
Today, the dinner changed to barbecue in the shore, we ate the fresh seafood and the marine delicacy with relish.

Thus, we forgot about the busy days in the royal capital, and fully enjoyed the vacation that harked back to summer holiday.

Now then, it's back to work tomorrow.
I'll get fired up and work hard!

SS: Tifaliza

"Tifaliza, has Kuro-sama contacted yet?"
"Not yet."

Elterina seems strange today.

She's usually the calm, cool, collected and commanding manager of Echigoya Firm, yet today she's humming unconcernedly like she's going to dance.
For her to be this merry, something really good must have happened.

I wouldn't have fallen into a slave if I had the inter-personnel skill to ask her, "Did something good happen?", but it's quite hard to change my personality and sense.

Someone appeared in the center of the office--it's our master and the owner of Echigoya Firm, Kuro-sama.

"Kuro-sama! Welcome back."

Elterina quickly rushed up to our white-haired Master.
I and the executives favor Kuro-sama, but I don't think it's at her level.

However, suddenly grasping Kuro-sama's hand, I think she lacks moderation as an employee.

Even though Kuro-sama doesn't mind it, your fingers! Having your fingers entwined is just too much!
The fingers that Elterina holds are moving toward the chest--I have to prevent it!

"Kuro-sama, this is the high-priority report. Please confirm it."
"Okay."

Kuro-sama breaks loose from Elterina's hands and receives the documents I presented.

Elterina glared at me reproachfully, but this can't be helped--you were too much.

◇

"Kuro-sama could I have your time for a bit?"

When the report reached a point where we could take a break, Elterina asked Kuro-sama while blushing.

"What is it?"
"Forgive me for talking about my personal affair, but I want to inform Kuro-sama about the matter of my engagement."

The engagement that Elterina talked about is probably about the one with the neighboring Viscount Satou Pendragon.
He's a Mithril explorer and also the vice minister of the Tourism Ministry that the prime minister founded. He's also engaged to the biological little sister of the crown prince Soltrick, the sixth princess Shistina, a promising young noble.

"It's about Sir Pendragon isn't it."
"Yes, it was safely broken off!"

She was always melancholic ever since the engagement was brought to her house by an upper noble.
It seems she was that frolic because it was called off.

"I'm happy that you're pleased."

I slightly frowned hearing what Kuro-sama had said.
That's as if--.

"Did Kuro-sama do something to it?"
"That's right."

My chest feels fuzzy even though it was a good thing.

--This is perhaps jealousy.

The things that happened during the first day of labyrinth training flashed in my mind.

At that time, I felt the same thing when I saw Elterina and the other executives being held in Kuro-sama's arms.
And, embarrassment that made me feel like running off and delight, when I was being embraced.

--It looks like I'm really also in love with Kuro-sama just like Elterina.

"Kuro-sama!"

I caught the waist of Elterina who was going to hug Kuro-sama with her arms open.

"--Tifa?"
"Kuro-sama is still talking."

Toward Elterina who turned to me looking wondering, I told her that as if that was the reason all along.

"Have you noticed that this appearance is not my true figure?"

Elterina and I affirm Kuro-sama's question.

It was usually perfect, but when he was looking sleepy during the end-of-year, the cheeks

part was slightly loose, the number of seam was different, and there were some times when his speech was different.
I think only Elterina and me noticed it.

"This figure was something I made so I could act without being tied."
"So Kuro-sama was really the same person as Hero Nanashi right."
"That's right."

Elterina trembles in delight hearing Kuro-sama answer.
I understand how she becomes like that hearing the one you love is the kingdom-saving hero.

However, I think that Hero Nanashi is also a temporary figure just like Kuro-sama's usual appearance.

"And, this figure is my true appearance."
"Wha! N-no way!"

Elterina opened her eyes wide and inched back.

Of course it's not that he's ugly.
His face is a bit plain, but a face is just a piece of thin skin. It's nothing but something used to attract the opposite sex.

In place of the shocked Elterina, I speak the words that she wants to say.

"So Kuro-sama is Viscount Pendragon."
"Yeah, I'm sorry for being like I fooled you."

Viscount Pendragon appeared under Kuro-sama's mask.

There are certainly too many common points between the two.
Distinguishing themselves in a short amount of time, having no greedy desires, and no political aim, yet they became the center of the authority, and, that their strength seemed bottomless.

--The fact that he's surrounded with only women is also the same.

"Ku-Kuro-sama.... S-since the engagement was called off, um, th-that mean, I'm--"
"It's not because I don't like you. I'm currently courting the queen of the fairy, so I don't intend to go forward with other marriage proposals."

Queen of the fairy?
Starting with the elves, most of the fairykin have parliament system with their elders, so the only ones that are monarchy are the Spriggan and Leprechaun kingdoms.
Either way, since they're not of the same race, the possibility of the other party agreeing with the proposal is nil.

Although, even excepting Princess Shistina who was announced to be his fiancee, there are Sera-sama the daughter of a duchy house, and the daughter of Muno Earldom, the [Aloof Beauty] Karina-sama.... Elterina has a lot of rivals.

I can't help but sympathize with Elterina, but it has nothing to do with me who's a slave.

"--Do you hear me? Tifaliza?"
"I'm sorry, I was thinking about something else."
"Then, I'll say it again okay. I'm thinking of freeing you from slavery. I want you to work at Echigoya Firm as an executive."

--freeing from slavery?

"I'm a crime slave, so freeing me should be impossible."
"I've got the permission from the king. Of course, for Nell too."

Kuro-sama returned a smile to my panicked words.

"I-I--don't want to be freed."

Going against that smile, I conveyed my wish.

"Why, could you tell me?"

I shake my head to the bewildered Kuro-sama.

--I'm a coward.

Kuro-sama probably will do bigger and bigger projects from now on, getting to even higher grounds, expanding his places of activities.
Unlike Elterina who's resourceful, the only thing that I can do is filing documents.
Without the bonds of slavery, I do not have the confidence to stand beside Kuro-sama.

And, I cannot honestly express the favor I have like Elterina.
I'm a "coward" who couldn't even pull Kuro-sama's hands when he brought me to the bed.

"Right now, not yet. Someday--"

--When I have enough confidence to tell my feeling straight.

Once I cross that, I will discard my slave position and tread my foot on the battlefield called love.
Someday, standing in line with Elterina who should be respected, I want to walk that road.

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